

APRIL - JUNE 1954

3/6

SIGHT AND SOUND

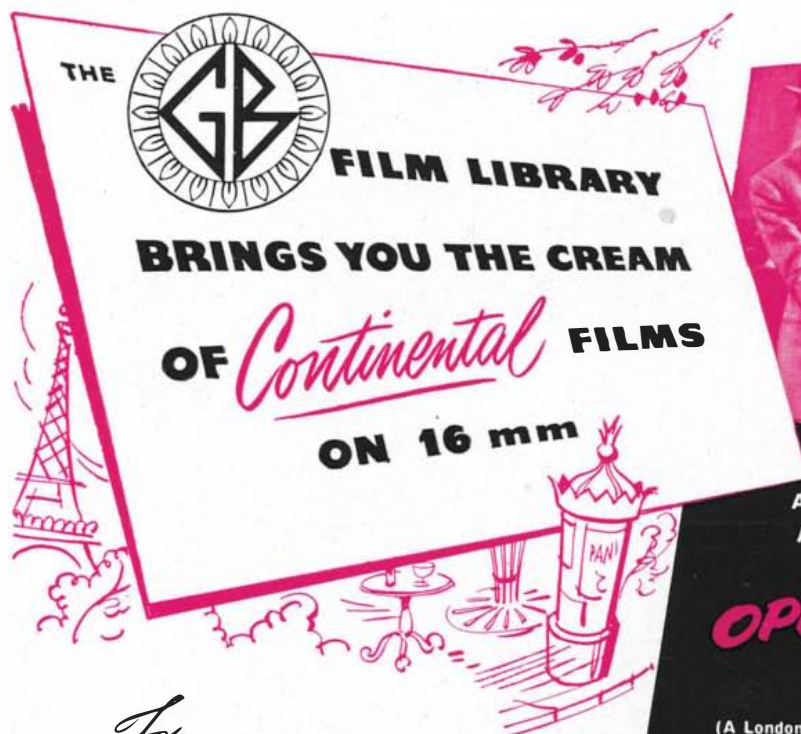
***The Film
Quarterly***



GARBO
by
Kenneth Tynan

Lindsay Anderson : The Work of Humphrey Jennings

Penelope Houston : Americans in Europe



For the discriminating 16 mm. film user a selection of the finest Continental films is obtainable from the G.B. Film Library. Every one of the twelve Continental films available has been chosen for its outstanding merit in the field of cinema entertainment. All carry English subtitles.



THE 1954
G.B. FILM
CATALOGUE

Lists more than 2,000 16 mm.
Entertainment Films. Send
for your copy today
enclosing 2/6 P.O.

G.B. FILM DIVISION

DEPT. SS/4/54, AINTREE ROAD, PERIVALE,
GREENFORD, MIDDLESEX



VIVIANE ROMANCE
MICHEL SIMON
in
Julien Duvivier's

PANIQUE

(A London Films Production)
Cert. "A" 1 hr. 31 mins.

ANNA MAGNANI
ALDO FABRIZI
in

**OPEN
CITY**

(A London Films Production)
Cert. "A" 1 hr. 41 mins.



ARLETTY
PIERRE BRASSEUR
JEAN LOUIS BARRAULT
in

**LES ENFANTS
DU PARADIS**

(A London Films Production)
Cert. "A" 2 hrs. 42 mins.



LOUIS JOUVET
SIMONE RENANT
BERNARD BLIER
SUZY DELAIR
in

**QUAI DES
ORFEVRES**

(A London Films Production)
Cert. "A" 1 hr. 46 mins.



G.B. EQUIPMENTS LTD., Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer St., London, W.1
Museum 5432

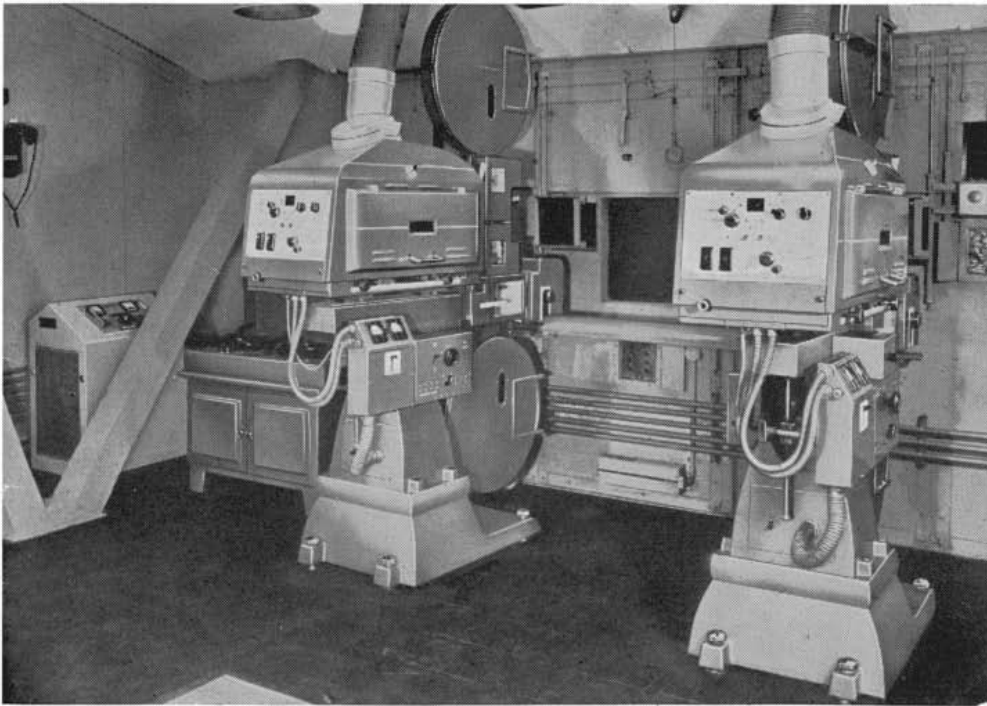
A Member of the British Optical & Precision Engineers Group

Within the J. Arthur Rank Organisation



AT THE NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

G.B.-KALEE LTD are proud to announce
the installation of the following
**GAUMONT-KALEE SOUND
AND PROJECTION EQUIPMENT**



- ★ GAUMONT-KALEE projector mechanisms, 'President' automatic feed, high intensity arc lamps and 5,000 ft. spool boxes.
- ★ Mechanical interlock.
- ★ Twin speed motor for projection of Silent and Sound films.
- ★ 30-watt dual amplification equipment. **Duosonic** speaker assembly.
- ★ G.B.-Bell & Howell 16 mm. Arc Projector.

G.B.-KALEE LTD

Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London, W.1

MUSEum 5432

A Member of the British Optical & Precision Engineers' Group

BOPE

for
**THREE
DIMENSIONAL
and 16 mm.
FILM
PRESENTATION**

Another installation by



**Everything for the
Cinema & Theatre**

A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

***—Outstanding ;

**—Enjoyable or out of the run ;

*—Entertaining.

- *AMANTS DE MINUIT, LES** (*Regent*) Slight, quite engaging story of brief romance between a counterfeiter and a lonely shop girl who meet on Christmas Eve. (Jean Marais, Dany Robin ; director, Roger Richebé.)
- *BENEATH THE TWELVE MILE REEF** (*Fox*) The rivalry of sponge divers off the coast of Florida ; commonplace story, interspersed with underwater action scenes. CinemaScope. (Gilbert Roland, Terry Moore ; director, Robert Webb.)
- *BRIGHT ROAD** (*M-G-M.*) A young teacher in a Southern school reforms a problem child ; sentimental little story, sympathetically but inexpertly told. All but one of the players are Negroes. (Dorothy Dandridge, Philip Hepburn ; director, Gerald Mayer.)
- *CALAMITY JANE** (*Warners*) Spirited musical set in the fightin' West, with Doris Day as Calamity Jane and Howard Keel as a singing Wild Bill Hickok. (Director, David Butler.)
- CASANOVA'S BIG NIGHT** (*Paramount*) Bob Hope is occasionally allowed to sparkle through the romantic drib-drib of a comedy swashbuckler. (Joan Fontaine ; director, Norman Z. McLeod.)
- CEASE FIRE** (*Paramount*) Korean war drama, played by a cast of professional soldiers ; routine and rather dull, though with some effective 3-D shots. (Director, Owen Crump.)
- *EASY TO LOVE** (*M-G-M.*) An aqua-musical with little or no story, in which Esther Williams acts a little and swims—a picture of health—a lot. (Van Johnson, Tony Martin ; director, Charles Walters.)
- *EIGHT O'CLOCK WALK** (*British Lion*) A young taxi driver is falsely accused of child murder ; average thriller, with authentic Old Bailey trial scenes. (Richard Attenborough, Cathy O'Donnell ; director, Lance Comfort.)
- **ESCAPE FROM FORT BRAVO** (*M-G-M.*) Civil War Western about stern Union commander and group of Confederate prisoners in a lonely Arizona fort. Thin characterisation, but wonderful scenery and a very exciting Indian attack. (William Holden, Eleanor Parker ; director, John Sturges.)
- GOOD DIE YOUNG, THE** (*Independent/British Lion*) Exaggerated melodrama in which a heartless playboy persuades three hard-up acquaintances to join him in robbing a mail van ; highly synthetic. (Richard Basehart, Gloria Grahame, Laurence Harvey ; director, Lewis Gilbert.)
- *HELL'S HALF ACRE** (*Republic*) Involved, quite exciting crime melodrama pitched in Honolulu. (Wendell Corey, Evelyn Keyes ; director, John H. Auer.)
- **HOBSON'S CHOICE** (*British Lion*) A craftsmanlike screen version of the old Lancashire comedy, which loses some of the feel of the piece by emphasising the trimmings rather than the players. *Reviewed.* (Charles Laughton, John Mills, Brenda de Banzie ; director, David Lean.)
- *HONDO** (*Warners*) John Wayne brought up to the Indian way of life ; a vigorous and well-made, though cliché-ridden, Western in 3-D. (Geraldine Page ; director, John Farrow.)
- *HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE** (*Fox*) Three millionaire-hunting models decide to marry for love ; the second CinemaScope feature would probably seem slicker and funnier on a normal-sized screen. *Reviewed.* (Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, Lauren Bacall ; director, Jean Negulesco.)
- *INSPECTOR CALLS, AN** (*British Lion*) A fairly literal adaptation of J. B. Priestley's play ; playing and direction are competent, if unexciting. (Alastair Sim, Eileen Moore, Jane Wenham ; director, Guy Hamilton.)
- **IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU** (*Columbia*) Judy Holliday, as a New York model determined to make a name for herself, plays expertly and engagingly in a comedy that is otherwise a little short on wit. *Reviewed.* (Jack Lemmon, Peter Lawford ; director, George Cukor.)
- ***JULIUS CAESAR** (*M-G-M.*) Arguably the best filmed Shakespeare yet ; certainly a remarkable achievement in its fidelity to the text, the quality of its performances and its direct and vigorous visual style. (John Gielgud, Marlon Brando, James Mason ; director, Joseph Mankiewicz.)
- KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES** (*Fox*) Intrigues, skirmishes and race prejudice on the North West Frontier ; CinemaScope makes a slow story seem slower. *Reviewed.* (Tyrone Power, Terry Moore ; director, Henry King.)
- *KISS ME KATE** (*M-G-M.*) 3-D version of Cole Porter's musical ; good songs, pleasing sets, fair direction and playing. (Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller ; director, George Sidney.)
- *LOVE LOTTERY, THE** (*G.F.D.*) A film star becomes a lottery prize ; satirical fantasy, embellished with numerous dream sequences, in which the initial joke loses its impetus. (David Niven, Anne Vernon, Peggy Cummins ; director, Charles Crichton.)
- **MADAME DE . . .** (*International*) Max Ophüls' version of Louise de Vilmorin's ironic short novel ; the director has substituted a highly decorative style for the austere grace of the original, and, though this makes for some fascinating effects, it takes the edge off the piece as a study of character. *Reviewed.* (Danielle Darrieux, Charles Boyer, Vittorio de Sica.)
- **MAGGIE, THE** (*G.F.D.*) Alexander Mackendrick's new film : a likeable study of the war between an American business man and the wily, obstinate crew of a Scottish puffer boat. *Reviewed.* (Paul Douglas, Alex Mackenzie.)
- *MANON DES SOURCES** (*British Lion*) Interminable Marcel Pagnol Provençal comedy about strange mountain girl's conflict with local village folk. Some warm characterisation, but far too much talk. (Jacqueline Pagnol, Raymond Pellegrin.)
- *MOON IS BLUE, THE** (*United Artists*) An innocuous comedy, celebrated for its difficulties with American censorship authorities, concerning a naïve but forceful girl, an architect and a middle-aged charmer ; smooth playing and writing. (Maggie McNamara, William Holden, David Niven ; director, Otto Preminger.)
- *RED GARTERS** (*Paramount*) Bubbly musical with well-handled story and excellent dialogue in parody of big Western features. The theatrical Theatre Guild staging is pretty but becomes monotonous. (Rosemary Clooney, Jack Carson ; director, George Marshall.)
- RIDE CLEAR OF DIABLO** (*G.F.D.*) Violent, sinewy Western ; Audie Murphy's sharp-shooting innocence wins through to avenge his murdered family. (Dan Duryea ; director, Jesse Hibbs.)
- RIVER BEAT** (*British Lion*) Competent, unpretentious British thriller, with the heroine unwillingly caught up in jewel smuggling. (John Bentley, Phyllis Kirk ; director, Guy Green.)
- **SALAIRE DE LA PEUR, LE** (*Films de France*) Clouzot's shocker about the transportation of high explosives ; details of the drive intensely exciting, but as a whole the film fails to justify its considerable pretensions. *Reviewed.* (Charles Vanel, Yves Montand.)
- STAR OF INDIA** (*Eros*) Overlong and phoney swashbuckler, set in seventeenth century France. (Cornel Wilde, Jean Wallace ; director, Arthur Lubin.)
- *THEY WHO DARE** (*British Lion*) A commando-type raid on Rhodes ; war-time adventure story, disappointingly directed by Lewis Milestone. (Dirk Bogarde, Denholm Elliott, Akim Tamiroff.)
- *VACANCES DE M. HULOT, LES** (*Films de France*) Jacques Tati disrupts the holiday peace of a little seaside town ; mildly amusing or intensely funny, depending on one's reactions to this highly individual clown.
- WEAK AND THE WICKED, THE** (*A.B.-Pathé*) Novelettish film of life in two women's prisons, with the usual parade of female character types—some very well played, others not. (Glynis Johns, John Gregson, Diana Dors ; director, J. Lee-Thompson.)
- *YOU KNOW WHAT SAILORS ARE** (*G.F.D.*) Lively comedy aimed at bureaucratic gullibility ; palls only when it sets out to be piquant. (Donald Sinden, Akim Tamiroff, Sarah Lawson ; director, Ken Annakin.)

SIGHT AND SOUND

Published by the British Film Institute

VOLUME 23 (New Quarterly Series) No. 4

APRIL-JUNE, 1954

Contents

Features:

IN THE PICTURE	170
THE FRONT PAGE	175
THREE ACTRESSES	194
ANSWERS TO A FILM QUIZ	202
A REVIEW OF REVIEWS	207
A NEW CLOWN	213
FILMS FROM FRANCE	214
The Film Folio (6):	
THE CINEMA	215
THE SEVENTH ART	216
THE SOUND TRACK	219
CORRESPONDENCE	220

Articles :

THE AMBASSADORS: <i>Americans in Europe</i>	176
ONLY CONNECT: <i>Some Aspects of the Work of Humphrey Jennings</i>	181
GARBO	187
<i>The British Film Industry: THE ADVENT OF LEVIATHAN</i>	191
STRICTLY FOR EGGHEADS	201
THE DECLINE OF CHARM	203
SHELL FILM UNIT : TWENTY ONE YEARS	209
THREE FROM SHELL	212

FILM REVIEWS

MADAME DE . . .	Lindsay Anderson	196	THE GOLDEN COACH	Tony Richardson	198
LE SALAIRE DE LA PEUR	Karel Reisz	197	THE MAGGIE	Karel Reisz	199
CINEMASCOPE PRODUCTIONS	Penelope Houston	198	THE DRAWINGS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI	Patricia Hutchins	200
HOBSON'S CHOICE	Philip Hope-Wallace	198	In Brief : IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU		200

BOOKS

A TREE IS A TREE	Lindsay Anderson	217	COMEDY FILMS	Liam O'Laoghaire	219
REFLECTIONS ON THE CINEMA and COCTEAU ON THE FILM	Alexander Mackendrick	218	In Brief : FILM ACTING and FILM TECHNIQUE		219

ON THE COVER: Greta Garbo; a picture taken by M-G-M's stills photographer, Clarence Bull, in 1937

Copyright in all articles originally published in SIGHT AND SOUND is reserved to the British Film Institute.

EDITORIAL and PUBLISHING OFFICES : British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2. (Temple Bar 1642).

Annual Subscription rate (4 issues) 15s. including postage. U.S.A.: \$3.

DEPUTY EDITOR : Penelope Houston.

EDITORIAL BOARD : Denis Forman, Gavin Lambert, Ernest Lindgren, Stanley Reed,

PRINTED BY Kent Paper Company Ltd., Ashford, Kent, England.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick Ltd., London

ADVERTISING OFFICES : Husey & Co., 92 Fleet Street, E.C.4. Central 8209).

CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A. : Harold Leonard	ITALY : Robert Hawkins
GERMANY : Gerd Treuhaft	FRANCE : Francis Koval
SCANDINAVIA : Fynn Syversen	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *London Can Take It, Fires Were Started, A Diary for Timothy, Arms and the Man, The Indiscretions of Eve, Maid of the Mountains, The Strong Man, The White Rose.*

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *Anna Karenina, As You Desire Me, Mata Hari, Queen Christina, Ninotchka, The Search, The Miniver Story, The Merry Widow, Lili* and pictures of Greta Garbo and King Vidor.

COLUMBIA PICTURES for *It Should Happen To You.*

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *About Mrs. Leslie, Sabrina Fair.*

WARNER BROS. for *A Star is Born, Dial M for Murder.*

UNITED ARTISTS for *The Private Life of Don Juan.*

J. ARTHUR RANK ORGANISATION for *Young Lovers.*

GENERAL FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Maggie, Trouble in Store, Give Us This Day.*

ROMULUS for *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman, Beat the Devil,* picture of John Huston.

20TH CENTURY-FOX for *Night and the City,* picture of Anatole Litvak.

LONDON FILMS for *The Belles of St. Trinians.*

SHELL FILM UNIT for *Machining of Metals, The Stanlow Story, Distillation, Prospecting for Petroleum, Le Mans 1952, Mille Miglia 1953.*

FILMS DE FRANCE for *Le Salaire de la Peur.*

INTERNATIONAL FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Madame de . . .*

FRANCO LONDON FILMS for *Le Blé en Herbe.*

PARIS FILM PRODUCTION for *Mam'zelle Nitouche.*

IAN DALRYMPLE for picture of Humphrey Jennings.

IN THE PICTURE

Telemeter

Hollywood's latest defence against television is to embrace it as a possible saviour, as appears from Paramount's acquisition of a 50 per cent interest in the International Telemeter Corporation. Telemeter is the recently developed "pay-as-you-see" system tested some months ago at Palm Springs. "It will ensure the entire future of the entertainment world," claims Sam Goldwyn. "This is as important to us as the first time sound was heard, or colour shown—even as important as the first time a motion picture was put on the screen," says Jesse Lasky.

The "Telemeter" itself is a small gadget which can be attached to any television set. Programmes are broadcast from an ordinary transmitter as a "scrambled" signal, which can only be unscrambled by the reception of another signal from the transmitter; this rectifying signal is obtained by dropping a coin into the Telemeter slot-machine. The actual procedure for receiving a Telemeter programme is, first, to tune to the channel on which it is being transmitted, when the screen appears as a blur, while a "Barker's" voice is heard repeatedly announcing the show, its credits, starting time and price—which is also automatically recorded on a little window in the Telemeter. When the appropriate coins are dropped into the slot (if the exact change is not available, the Telemeter can record a surplus as credit), the announcer's voice is cut off, the signals clear, and the show can go on.

The most obvious advantage of this system is that the increasing cost of television broadcasting is directly subsidised instead of subsidised by advertising revenue. International Telemeter Corporation claim that with such a subscription system it would be possible to produce and broadcast specialised programmes of a limited appeal; "Telemeter can open to the public broader and more varied cultural programmes than heretofore have been accessible because of the limitations of sponsored TV." Educational television can be, "not only self-supporting but profitable for the university or college owning the station." A programme could be transmitted for two people only, as long as these two were prepared (and able) to insert enough coins into their Telemeters to



"Dial M for Murder": Ray Milland and Grace Kelly in a scene from Hitchcock's new film.

cover production and transmission costs. "For example, a great surgeon in a city with a tiny microphone in his mask can explain to doctors all over the U.S., who may be watching the operation via TV, exactly how he is performing his operation and what he is finding." The Corporation foresees greater things even than this. Telemeters are fitted with a response button which makes it possible for a student to express a "yes" or "no" opinion that is recorded on magnetic tape (the tape's primary function is to record what programmes have been subscribed for) and can be transcribed and despatched to the television lecturer for checking. In as far as the higher education can be disseminated in question and yes-no answer form, Telemeter intends to do it.

More important is the system's potential effect on the various entertainment industries. A film costing five million dollars could allegedly recoup its whole cost from subscribers at a single showing; a first night at the Metropolitan Opera House, it is claimed, could gross half a million dollars at two dollars per set; a big baseball game could attract a television "gate" of five million dollars. This new source of revenue could obviously give a tremendous boost to the production side of the film industry. But the most urgent problem is the possible effect of Telemeter on cinema takings—already greatly reduced by ordinary television. Paramount are associated with a great many cinemas, and in the experimental area cinema owners have shared the television revenues. In Britain, however, a spokesman of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association is recorded as saying: "This development is something we do not want to encourage in any way."

Meanwhile, *The Financial Times* has shown great interest in the possibilities of the introduction of Telemeter into this country, while *The Daily Telegraph* has published an enthusiastic correspondence in its favour. Sir Cedric Hardwicke's opinion that, "within a few years there could be as many stations in Britain as there are publishing houses. . . . This would be to bring to the people at a low cost the best artistry the country has to offer, which at present can be enjoyed only by the lucky few" seems to leave out of account the man who pays the piper, upon whose will the disposal of Telemeter's potential riches will finally depend. Two days later, Sir Alexander Korda wrote: "I do not share the view that subscriber television is a menace to the cinemas," because the exciting new televised shows he foresees "could be seen not only at home on their own small television sets but in



Hermione Baddeley in Frank Launder's "The Belles of St. Trinians." Alastair Sim appears as the headmistress of the Ronald Searle school, and as her bookmaker brother.



"Dial M for Murder" : Grace Kelly threatened by Anthony Dawson

cinemas, on the big new screens and with all the colour and spectacular new effects which the cinemas are developing." Doubtful consolation perhaps for the exhibitors.

Both Sir Alexander and Mr. Randolph Churchill deplored the Government's intentness on commercial television and failure to consider the subscriber system. "This is a time for enterprise and not for a man to be walking ahead of the machine with a red flag," said Sir Alexander. "Surely this is no moment for us to go floundering half-heartedly up a blind alley, the end of which the Americans have already reached?" asked Mr. Churchill.

What, meanwhile, are the chances of Telemeter's introduction in this country? In America the apparatus is almost perfected, though permission to introduce it has yet to be obtained from the Federal Communications Commission. Representatives of International Telemeter Corporation have already carried on talks in Britain and hope to try out the system—probably on the closed television circuit of a large hotel—before the end of the year. But many hurdles—not least the Postmaster-General and the Commissioners of Customs and Excise—lie between experiments and the establishment of Telemeter; and I.T.C.'s most hopeful forecast for the operation of a subscriber system in Britain is 1956.

Festival in Brazil

ERNEST LINDGREN writes: The Festival of Sao Paulo, which opened officially on February 12th, has been organised to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city, and is the first big international film festival to be held in Brazil. This report, written only half-way through the Festival (the main American party has not yet arrived), can only be an interim one.

The Festival has two distinctive features. The lesser is that, as at Edinburgh, no prizes are awarded. The second, and more important, is the proportion of time given up to retrospective programmes and the history of the cinema: in various cinemas are to be found a series of film classics (*Great Moments of the Cinema*), a series of twelve programmes entitled *Homage to von Stroheim* (supported by the presence of Stroheim himself and by a magnificent exhibition of stills and scripts taken from his personal collection), a retrospective programme of Brazilian films, a *Homage to Abel Gance*, a *Homage to Cavalcanti* and revivals of comparatively recent films; finally, lectures on film history are being given by André Bazin, Henri Langlois, Gianni Comenini and myself. Everyone agrees that this is the first Festival

"The Young Lovers" : David Knight and Odile Versois. Anthony Asquith's new film is the story of a young American who falls in love with a girl from an Iron Curtain country.

of its kind in which the past achievement of the cinema has been brought so prominently to the fore, and the showings attract enthusiastic audiences.

If the retrospective exhibitions give the Festival quality and substance, it is the modern side, of course, which provides the usual Festival publicity and excitement; yet it must be confessed that the newer films, so far, have been disappointing. The best have been our own *Genevieve* and Marc Allegret's *Juliette*, a light-weight comedy; Ingmar Bergman's *Gicklarnas Afton* (reminiscent in theme and treatment of Murnau's *Variety*) is well made but heavy with self-pity, introspection and violence; Grémillon's *L'Amour d'une Femme*, though based on the cliché situation of a woman doctor's struggle between love and her profession, is sufficiently well acted and directed to stand above the general level. One returns, however, to *Genevieve*, which was shown to a packed Sunday afternoon audience and, although unsubtitled, seems genuinely to have been the biggest success to date.

What the British delegation most bitterly regrets is its own smallness. It numbers, in fact, five persons: Henry Cornelius, "Jamie" Jamieson, representing the Rank Organisation, Catherine de la Roche, Francis Koval and myself, contrasting strongly with the French (about thirty), the Italians (fifteen) and the Americans (thirty-six). The British industry is thus only meagrely represented, and our film entry would have been limited to *The Conquest of Everest* (arranged by the Foreign Office), had not the Rank Organisation jumped in at the last moment with *Genevieve*. The opportunity to make a big publicity splash here in the Latin American market, where there is a strong disposition towards British pictures, has been only half-taken. We know the films we are showing are both good; but only those with first-hand experience of Festivals will know what one or two British stars could have done for us here in addition.

Having said so much about the British, it is perhaps apposite to add that the Brazilian organisers have had their own film industry troubles. The production industry, which is in financial difficulties, is very critical of the expense (said to be £130,000) of the Festival; I heard a day or two ago that some of the malcontents had banded together to organise a novel kind of filibuster—a twenty-four-hour continuous television programme designed as an opposition demonstration. Meanwhile, however, the Festival goes on. . . .





Arrival in London : Erich von Stroheim and Denise Vernac.

Stroheim in London

Erich von Stroheim, a little stockier perhaps but still at 68 splendidly like the figure one had expected, frowned at the Press cuttings of his first day's visit to London. "*The morons! Not a word about the films, not an intelligent word. It's all the old stuff about The Bullet-headed Prussian again. I'm not a Prussian, I'm Austrian. It's like calling an Englishman Irish. And my head isn't bullet-shaped. I've seen bullets.*" It was easy to sympathise. Stroheim came to London to attend the opening of a fourteen weeks' season of his films at the National Film Theatre, and expected serious critical comments on his films. Later, when the films were shown to the Press, he did, of course, get these, but for the moment there were the reporters. "*Is it true, Mr. Stroheim,*" one of them wanted to know, "*that you taught America how to make love?*" "*No,*" answered Stroheim, and patiently waited for the next question. At the Press conference that followed, one or two journalists asked him about his films, but by this time, after innumerable questions about his private life—"Do you believe in beating women off the screen?"—his mood was explosive. Since it was apparently expected of him, he started giving an imitation of his screen self and, being on the defensive, he attacked. One or two journalists will remember their brief encounters with him.

Stroheim's public mask can be forbidding. The clicking of the heels, the curt bow, the severe scrutiny of each new face—all this is played only half tongue-in-cheek. Though he once was among the most influential and materially successful of directors, Stroheim has not made a film for twenty years and is sensitive to the slightest note of patronage. He wants to be assured of his listener's sympathy and interest before he will talk. Even then the mask never drops for long: it is, one soon realises, not a mask at all but an expression of the face itself. In the middle of an engrossing account of the making of *Greed*, a photographer's assistant enters the room, and Stroheim interrupts his narrative to shake his hand with full ceremony, even though no one has introduced them. Formalities are very important to him.

Stroheim talks of the production of *Greed* as the central experience of his life. He recalls in astonishing detail the particulars of the original producer's instructions that Frank Norris's *McTeague* was to be followed to the letter; of the costumes and real-life settings; of the temperature during shooting in Death Valley; of his final interview with Mayer which sealed the film's fate: "*When it was all over, he dismissed me. Just before I left the room he said, 'That's a nice pair of gloves you're wearing.'*"

Questioned on his methods of direction, Stroheim was not

very revealing; or, perhaps, revealing by omission. What seems to have interested him most, at any rate in retrospect, was the construction of sets and design of uniforms. Authenticity of detail was a passion with him which has not weakened: he talks at length and with love of the buttons and lapels of a uniform, immensely enjoying his expertise. Any attempts to bring back the conversation to mundane subjects like camerawork or editing are firmly side-tracked. "*I hate technique,*" he says.

Stroheim recalled a shot from *Greed* which gave a momentary glimpse into the workings of his temperament. Towards the end of the film, there is a shot in which Marcus Schooler hurls a knife at McTeague: the knife misses, piercing the door behind him inches from McTeague's ear. "*It was a very goddam tough scene to shoot, I tell you.*" Stroheim ordered a professional knife-thrower on the set, but Gibson Gowland refused to let him use his face as a target. Stroheim pleaded with him, ordered, cajoled, finally decided to subject himself to the ordeal. Gowland admired the director's courage but refused to emulate it. In the end Stroheim was manoeuvred off the set; the shot was taken in reverse, starting with the knife lightly stuck in the door and then being pulled out with a piece of invisible horse-hair. What up to this point had been an amusing anecdote suddenly turned into an intense *cri-de-cœur*. "*I hate things like that,*" Stroheim shouted. "*I can't cheat—I don't know how. My mind doesn't work like that.*" Someone suggested that the trick did not in fact come off, that the actor's expression in the shot was false. But Stroheim would have none of this. The point was not to be argued from results, this was a matter of principle. "*The shot is perfect. Look, if I hadn't told you about the damned thing before you saw it you wouldn't have noticed it.*"

There is naturally a temptation to relate the man and his work. One immediately catches in Stroheim's conversation a refusal to argue or compromise, a firm belief in absolutes. If Frank Norris's plot is to be followed faithfully in *Greed*, then it follows that the heroine must be given that "*ridiculous long black wig that makes her look like a cluck*" because this, too, the author described in the book. If authenticity is to be achieved then one must be completely consistent: if necessary, hurl knives at actors. "*But surely . . .*" one keeps wanting to say. "*No buts,*" he answers.

Stroheim's films make great play with the ceremonial of life: one of their recurring themes is the contrast between the nature of the characters and their manners. In *Foolish Wives* it is the well-dressed and sumptuously housed that are wicked. In *Queen Kelly* the dissolute, beautifully uniformed prince is carried insensate after a night's orgy up a huge

polished marble staircase; the innocent little Queen Kelly sleeps in the cold stone dormitory of a convent. The contrasts between Stroheim's characters and the front they present are among the main fascinations of the films. Yet nowhere, perhaps, is this interplay more intriguing than in the man himself. Stroheim's extraordinary mixture of personal charm and bluntness, sincerity and pomp, love of appearance and rigid adherence to principle make him the perfectly right man to have created *Foolish Wives*—and *Greed*.

KAREL REISZ.

The Big Money

Whatever may be happening to box-office receipts generally, there is a clear indication in reports from America that the pictures which take the big money are taking more than at any previous time in the screen's history. *Variety's* list of the "top grossers" of 1953 (the list includes estimated as well as actual grosses), opens with *The Robe*, likely to net the staggering figure of between \$20-30,000,000, and so challenging *Gone With the Wind's* massive \$26,000,000 total. Then come *From Here to Eternity* (\$12,500,000), *Shane* (\$8,000,000), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (\$7,500,000), Disney's *Peter Pan* (\$7,000,000), *Hans Christian Andersen* (\$6,000,000) and the 3-D *House of Wax* (\$5,500,000). These seven films are all among the top thirty in *Variety's* list of "All-Time Top Grossers", as are four pictures from 1952—*The Greatest Show on Earth*, *Quo Vadis*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and *Ivanhoe*. Of the top thirty, in fact, only six—*Gone With the Wind*, *This is The Army*, *Snow White*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Sergeant York* and *The Big Parade*—date from earlier than 1944. And from the total list of 106 films, all grossing \$4,000,000 and over, only 15 were made more than ten years ago. Increased admission prices, presumably, go some way towards explaining these figures; conversely, the change in the value of money invalidates any serious comparison between the box-office receipts of twenty or thirty years ago and those of today.

There are surprises in the list: that *The Robe* and *G.W.T.W.* should have a lead, actual or estimated, of more than \$10,000,000 over the nearest competitor (*The Greatest Show on Earth*); that *How to Marry a Millionaire*, the second CinemaScope feature, should be placed so far below *The Robe*; that *From Here to Eternity* is considered likely to outdo *Quo Vadis* and *Duel in the Sun*; that *The Big Parade* (\$5,500,000) should still hold its place. The most profitable of all silent pictures was, of course, *The Birth of a Nation*, but as its takings have apparently been estimated at anything from ten

to fifty million dollars, it has no place in this list. Other films of the 'twenties figure more modestly: *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (57th), *Ben Hur* (95th), *The Singing Fool* (104th); and, in this all-American assembly, one British picture—as opposed to International ventures such as *Moulin Rouge*—has a place: *The Red Shoes*, on the \$5,000,000 mark.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

Preston Sturges: *The Millionairess*, from the Shaw play, and starring Katharine Hepburn.

Robert Parrish: *The Purple Plain*, based on the novel by H. E. Bates, with Gregory Peck and a Burmese actress, Win Min Than.

George More O'Ferrall: *The Green Scarf*. Based on a novel about a deaf-and-dumb man who is accused of murder; with Michael Redgrave, Ann Todd and Leo Genn.

Ken Annakin: *The Monarch of the Glen*, from Sir Compton Mackenzie's novel, for a new company formed by Sir Compton to make films in Scotland. Probably in CinemaScope.

Ronald Neame: *Highland Fling*, adapted from David Walker's novel *Digby*, with Spencer Tracy as the American visitor to Scotland.

France

Jacques Becker: *Ali-Baba et les Quarante Voleurs*, with Fernandel. To be filmed in EastmanColor.

Claude Autant-Lara: *Le Rouge et le Noir*, with Danielle Darrieux and Gérard Philipe.

Yves Allegret: *Mam'zelle Nitouche*, from the operetta, with Fernandel and Pier Angeli. In EastmanColor.

Henri-George Clouzot: *Ne Quittez Pas l'Ecoute*, a story about a fishing vessel lost in Northern waters.

U.S.A.

Stanley Donen: *A Bride for Seven Brothers*, with Jane Powell, Howard Keel and Jeff Richards: in CinemaScope.

Alfred Hitchcock: *Catch a Thief*, a thriller, with Cary Grant.

Otto Preminger: *The Doctor's Dilemma*, to be made in Technicolor, probably in Britain.

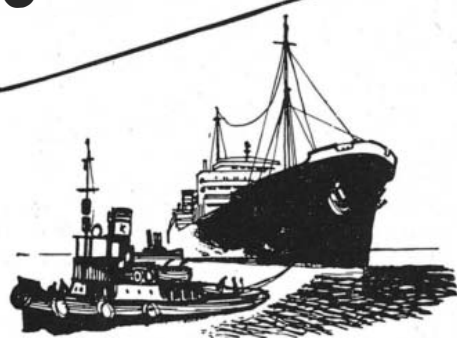
Fritz Lang: *The Human Beast*, a re-make of *La Bête Humaine*, with Gloria Grahame and Glenn Ford.

Elia Kazan: *Waterfront*, a story about New York waterfront gangs, with Marlon Brando and Lee J. Cobb.

Mark Robson: *Phfft*, a comedy by George Axelrod; Judy Holliday and Jack Lemmon star.

"Touchez pas au Grisbi": Jacques Becker's new film, in which Jean Gabin plays the lead, is a story of gangsters operating in Montmartre.





A SERIES of films, sponsored by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

All these films have been made to entertain as well as instruct and are already enjoying a wide distribution in many countries. They also include films of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is described briefly here, and details of the



“TANKER STORY”

Nearly a quarter of all the ships at sea are oil tankers. On an average day there are about ten million tons of oil in transit.

This 10-minute film shows the organisation necessary to govern a great tanker fleet, the complexities involved in re-routing tankers to meet the demands of refineries, and the living and working conditions of the crews who man the ships.

The film ends with the launch and trials of **BRITISH SAILOR**, a 32,000 ton newcomer to the fleet of the British Tanker Company, shipping subsidiary of Anglo-Iranian.

others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Film Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.★



Sponsored by

ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL COMPANY, LTD., LONDON

★ PETROLEUM FILMS BUREAU, 29 NEW BOND STREET, W.1

How Goes the Enemy?

"How goes the enemy?" To answer this question the cinema exhibitor of today no longer looks at his watch, but instead turns up the latest figures from the Postmaster-General. The enemy, so it seems from a recent survey of Britain's cinema-going habits, is not time; it is television. This will be no surprise to most people, for the effect of television on cinema attendances has been a matter of much head-shaking for the past four or five years in this country, quite apart from the American film industry's policy of counter-attack. What the survey does do, however, is to provide some statistical evidence for the accepted fact.

Prepared by two members of the Board of Trade Statistics Department and read to the Royal Statistical Society in London at the end of January, the survey is a collation of official quarterly returns made by all exhibitors in the country from the beginning of 1950 to the end of 1952. During those three years, the average weekly attendance at British cinemas declined from 26.8 million to 26.3 million, and then to 25.2 million. During the same period the number of television licences in force increased from just under 250,000 to nearly 2,000,000—an increase which is equivalent to one new licence every minute of every day in the three years.

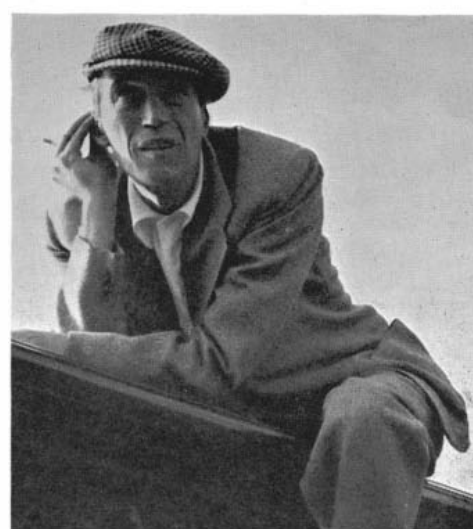
The opening of the two television transmitters, at Sutton Coldfield in November, 1949, and at Holme Moss in October, 1951, enabled the authors to examine the trend of cinema admissions in areas within good reception range of these transmitters, and then to compare this trend with the increase in television licences in the same area. In order to isolate other factors which might have affected admissions, they also examined the trend of attendances in those areas in which the number of television licences was negligible throughout the three years. Their conclusion—somewhat guarded, as is the way with statisticians—was that "*perhaps three-quarters of the decline in admissions (over the country as a whole) between 1950 and 1952 was due to the effect of television. The influence of economies in family expenditure which we have suggested was responsible for most of the decline between 1946 and 1950 cannot be said, with certainty, to have been eliminated completely, but on the whole it has given way to this new and, from the film industry's point of view, more potent factor. As television coverage is extended, and possibly its hours of transmission increased, it is natural to expect that cinema admissions will continue to decline; but it is as yet too soon to be sure that cinema business will not recover as the novelty of television wears off.*"

Since the end of 1952, the march of television has continued with ever-increasing vigour. The three million licence mark was reached in January of this year and the rate of expansion is now about three a minute. Four-fifths of the population are in television reception areas; before the end of the year the proportion will be nearer nine-tenths; television performers become the new national figures; the popular Press significantly gives a wider coverage to television than to films, the theatre or the outmoded sound broadcasting. Meanwhile, the trend of cinema admissions is still downwards—an average of about 24 million a week during 1953. How much lower can it sink before cinema business becomes uneconomic?

Commenting on the Board of Trade survey, Sir Philip Warter, chairman of the Associated British Picture Corporation, is reported to have taken a fairly optimistic view of the situation. "*The survey is a little out of date. Due to better films and the possible fact that many set-owners have completed their instalments, attendances are rising once more. TV is not the menace many feared. Some 24 million people go weekly to the cinema. If that figure dropped to 18 million, we could still do business.*" So far there have not been many casualties among cinemas, but it is quite certain that if the attendance did drop as low as 18 million then, although the larger circuits could still do business, many of the small houses throughout the country would have to close.

Considering the very loyal following of regular cinemagoers that still exists, it seems unlikely that there will be a return to the pre-war attendance level, however great the passing charms of television—and there is reason to believe that it is the newcomers to television who watch it most avidly, and that the increase in the audience for regular programmes fails to keep pace proportionately to the rise in the number of television licences. Nevertheless, it is the younger section of the population which forms traditionally the main body of regular film fans. It seems therefore that the film industry must increasingly recognise—as it presumably does—the need to encourage the cinema-going habit in the younger generation; for, if they reach the crucial "cinema age" with their minds over-tuned to television, then the cinema may continue to miss its millions indefinitely.

**The
Front
Page**



Three ambassadors : left, Anatole Litvak (standing) ; centre, Lewis Milestone ; right, John Huston.

THE AMBASSADORS

Americans in Europe

IN the 'twenties and 'thirties, Europe went to Hollywood. Continental stars, directors, highly-paid British novelists attracted by the prospect of becoming still more highly-paid screenwriters, moved to California, to an industry which bought talent at the top market prices and employed it, on the whole, none too badly. Other national cinemas—the French, the Italian, the British—have achieved most when they have appeared most uncompromisingly national; Hollywood, setting itself up as the international capital of the cinema, operating on a scale so grandiose that a single continent could scarcely supply its raw material, demanded of its importations merely that they accept its disciplines. This policy has, of course, never been abandoned; since the war, a few directors have made the journey, a number of stars, and a very few writers. But Dr. Edith Sitwell's recent excursion (one remembers her assurance to the Press that Hollywood was "delightful . . . quaint and unspoiled") was magnificent just because it was so unexpected. Hollywood no longer seems an inevitable destination.

Hollywood, in fact, has been discovering Europe. During the past few years, audiences have increasingly become accustomed to the co-production, to the "British" film with an American producer, director, script-writer and star, to the British second-feature thriller in which the detective hero, if not actually played by an American, conscientiously speaks like one, to the pictures, such as *The Million Pound Note* or *Laughing Anne*, whose box-office appeal seems to be calculated in terms of a combination of British and American players. The mildly comic situation arises in which, while 20th Century-Fox lines up its imported talent for *The Robe*, M-G-M ships the big Hollywood names—Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner—over to this country for *Knights of the Round Table*. These, though, are routine commercial manoeuvres, and scarcely new when one remembers *A Yank at Oxford*, *The Citadel* and the other Anglo-American pictures of the 'thirties. The new factor is the decision of some

Penelope Houston

leading Hollywood directors, notably Huston and Milestone, to work in Europe and for European companies.

The American companies' motives are, as might be expected, to a considerable extent financial. Apart from the policy of producing films in Europe to make use of frozen currency, particularly sterling, and the British Government's encouragement of this as a means of providing employment in our own industry, there was the realisation, encouraged by the post-war Italian films, that in Europe costs could be kept down. *Time* recently reported that Disney's British-made swashbucklers cost about \$1,500,000 apiece, or a third of their probable equivalent in America; conversely, Arthur Mayer, writing in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, claims that in 1949 the average negative cost at Fox was \$2,200,000. And, from the individual's point of view, there was until recently the celebrated eighteen months clause, that loophole in American tax law which encouraged stars and directors to wander around Europe, doing time, as it were, to save money.

We can only guess, of course, at the individual motives—at the possible effects of the changed climate in Hollywood, where the Un-American investigators and McCarthyism have done their work, the social conscience, so fashionable a few years ago, has become a liability, and an industry gloomily on the defensive against television chances the "gimmick" presentation and plays timidly safe with what goes on the screen. The independent producer, the intelligent low-budget picture, no longer find encouragement, and the director prepared to take risks may well feel that he must take them elsewhere. Of the exiles, the black-listed writers and directors (among them some of the most promising names in the American industry of four or five years ago), I do not intend to write here; their names are well enough known, as are their problems in finding work even in Europe. Publicity does them no service.

II

Risking a conjecture, one may speculate that in twenty

or thirty years' time the slackening of Hollywood's grip, the decline in creative vitality, may appear as one of the main themes in the record of the cinema during this decade; the firmly-established, the still resourceful veterans seem now to be making most of the good pictures. And perhaps the shift of interest towards Europe may be symptomatic of this. To date, however, the work of the American directors in Europe provides an unexpected commentary on the validity of the much-criticised Hollywood system. The record of the small-scale international cinema disappoints.

One of the first Anglo-American films seriously to attract critical attention, however, was international only in its casting: in its attitude of mind, Edward Dmytryk's *Give Us This Day* (1949) was an uncompromisingly, even defiantly, American picture. With this film Dmytryk, who had left Hollywood after a brush with the Un-American Activities Committee and had made two minor pictures in Britain, achieved a personal ambition which had eluded him in his own country: to film Pietro di Donato's well-known story *Christ in Concrete*. The story, concerned with the hardships of an Italian bricklayer in Brooklyn during the Depression and his eventual death under an avalanche of wet concrete, belongs to that morose school of American writing which sentimentalises the working class, strains after symbolism—here an implausible religious allegory—and conscientiously piles on the shock effect. Dmytryk's film, in which the Italian workmen spoke in that bogus "poetic" idiom usually reserved by Hollywood for its Mexican peasants, if anything accentuated these defects. It had also the assets of its genre: compassion, a sombre determination to present at least a part of the truth about its subject, intelligent craftsmanship. In itself, the film was a comparatively minor entry in the American social conscience school; filmed overseas, in a studio-built Brooklyn not materially different from the familiar Hollywood version, it appeared remarkable. It was the first, and quite possibly the last, film set wholly

in America to be produced in a British studio; it would not, one suspects, be made today.

At the other extreme of the scale is a picture such as Albert Lewin's *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, a curiosity of a sort that seems only to come about through international co-operation—*Decameron Nights* is a lesser example. To make *Pandora*, Lewin assembled two Hollywood stars (James Mason and Ava Gardner), a team of British players, a Spanish bullfighter, a British cameraman (Jack Cardiff), and himself directed, produced and wrote the script. The result, it will be remembered, eccentrically combined the legends of Pandora and of the Flying Dutchman, and added excursions into bullfighting, car-racing, archæology, and numerous references to fate, tragic inevitability and Omar Khayyam's verse about the moving finger. This handsomely photographed, stiffly undramatic and entirely solemn extravaganza came as a timely warning to the Americans in Europe: an illustration of the romantic fallacy, the traps of the picturesque and the literary, the entanglements waiting, as in a James novel, for the unwary American.

The rejection of Europe, the intoxicated acceptance: these mark the two extremes. There remained the middle course, the adaptation to a European setting of the Hollywood film which looks moderately conscientiously at a contemporary situation, before coming up with the evasive half-truth of a contrived ending. *The Search*, made by a Swiss company but sponsored by M-G-M, and *Decision Before Dawn*, directed by Anatole Litvak for Fox, had little in common as films, yet appear as characteristic of their time, and their different origins, as *Crossfire*, *Gentleman's Agreement* or Fred Zinnemann's later *The Men*. *The Search*, made a good deal more roughly than *The Men* or *Teresa* (in which, for the war sequences, Zinnemann again came profitably to Europe), followed the Swiss *The Last Chance* in the use of location work, non-professional players and an approach resolutely international. But, though the script was by the Swiss writer



The romantic fallacy : Ava Gardner and James Mason in a scene from "Pandora and the Flying Dutchman".



"The Search" : Montgomery Clift and Ivan Jandl.

Lazar Wechsler, this story of the lost children of the concentration camps and of the rescue of one small boy by a kindly G.I. struck one as geared to a specifically American sentimentality. The realism of the early sequences, of the crowds of frightened, sullen children, seemed in sharp contrast to the comforting fable of the rescue of the child, the rehabilitating effects of baseball and U.S. army rations. For the film, though, it could legitimately be claimed that it employed sentimental contrivance where the truth might have been too painful. Humane and compassionate, *The Search* was the work of one of the few American directors who could be trusted with such an assignment—trusted to respect the realities of the situation, as far as he was able, and to sustain the plain, unshowy style the subject demanded.

Decision Before Dawn was a different matter. This film had an exceptionally interesting story to work with: an account of the German prisoners-of-war who, shortly before the defeat of their country, were trained by the Americans as spies and sent back to operate behind their own lines. The subject—the nature of treason—the well-chosen location backgrounds, a strong German cast led by Oskar Werner and Hildegard Neff, provided the film with opportunities which it proved unprepared to take. Moral issues were raised, discussed unrevealingly though at length, and casually dropped; his American employers patronised the German hero, and the film-makers seemed to share their attitude. Zinnemann had respected his subject; *Decision Before Dawn* was an instance of the American film that makes a parade of seriousness, elaborately achieves a surface realism in its settings, but is too superficial, too disengaged, to appear other than spurious.

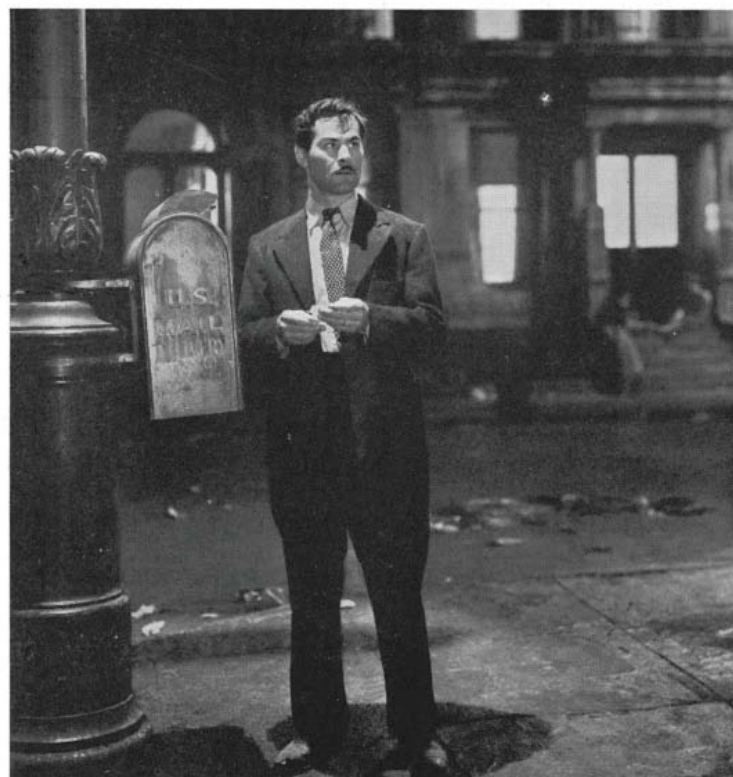
Brooklyn in a British Studio : Sam Wanamaker in "Give Us This Day".

III

These ventures, together with a number of commercial pictures made in British studios and on European locations and the unique operations of Orson Welles, whose *Othello* (as yet unseen here) was filmed in two continents and over several years, can be described as preliminary skirmishes with the European scene. The test case, as it were, was the arrival in Europe of John Huston, whose reputation was already something of a legend and had gained, if anything, from the reports that his latest film had been wrecked by front-office intervention. These stories about *The Red Badge of Courage*, however, scarcely survived the appearance of the film, let alone of Lillian Ross's revealing account in *Picture*.

Huston's American films had given conclusive evidence of a talent exceptionally skilful within its range, of great driving force, an unusual degree of personal control and authority, a detached, ironic attitude to human character. His most successful films (*The Maltese Falcon*, an almost flawless adaptation from Dashiell Hammett, *Treasure of Sierra Madre* and *The Asphalt Jungle*) dealt with tensions between individuals engaged on some massive project, usually criminal, whose failure was inherent in the character of the men concerned. When, as in *We Were Strangers* or *The Red Badge of Courage*, he tackled subjects demanding greater sympathy, a more complex approach to personality, he revealed limitations: characters appeared under-developed, situations stated rather than imaginatively analysed. One remembers Gottfried Reinhardt's comment that in *The Red Badge*, "There is no story because we do not show what the youth is thinking. It is not in the script. John said he would put it on the screen. It is not on the screen."

Huston's last three pictures have been nominally British—from another point of view, they have become progressively less American. And, during their making, there has developed around Huston, alone among the younger





Two views of contemporary Britain : left, middle-class domesticity in " *The Miniver Story* " ; right, night life in Soho as interpreted by " *Night and the City* ".

generation of film-makers, a reputation as a "character," a flamboyant, outsize personality, a sort of Hemingway of the cinema. This reputation exists, of course, quite independently of his actual films; yet while it can be equated easily enough with most of Huston's American pictures, it seems somewhat at odds with the subjects on which he has worked in Europe. For the director of *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Asphalt Jungle*, the first British-based venture, *The African Queen*, was certainly a departure. Perhaps the departure was a little too abrupt, for Huston did not appear altogether at ease with his serio-comic adventure story. The mixture of high and low comedy, irony, pathos and adventure never quite fused into a satisfactory whole; and though the farcical ending, turning the whole brave exploit of the *African Queen* into pantomime, struck most critics as a forgivable mistake, it indicated, too, Huston's lack of real sympathy with his subject. The film remains notable, however, for Katharine Hepburn's witty and touching performance as the indomitable Englishwoman.

Moulin Rouge has been the subject of considerable critical discussion: in taking for his subject a romanticised version of the life of Toulouse Lautrec, Huston, it seemed, had moved for the first time into a territory where his customary terms of reference no longer held good. The film had an opening reel of undeniable panache, and subsequently mixed its conventional ingredients—the painter's love life, the can-can girls, the naughtiness of the Latin Quarter—to obvious popular approval. As a screen biography of an artist, *Moulin Rouge* was not appreciably more accurate or more perceptive than most, principally because the felicity of its costumes and period settings was not matched by a corresponding dramatic response to character and atmosphere. Considered as spectacle, however, the film offered compensation in the stylish richness of its colour photography; and Huston's ability to give his narrative a smooth, efficient surface was as evident as ever.

Beat the Devil, another new departure, was a burlesque thriller which seemed to show the director reacting against studio limitations. Its faults—slipshod construction, an encouragement of over-playing, an apparent determination

to conceal the point of the story for as long as possible from the audience—were of a type rarely found in the Hollywood studio-disciplined production. By comparing the film to his own *The Maltese Falcon*, Huston only pointed the contrast; on the one hand, the sharp, controlled narrative; on the other, an erratic, showy burlesque which seemed at times disconcertingly unaware of its own lack of wit.

It is worth noting that Huston's first two European films stand high in the international box-office lists, as his American pictures on the whole do not; that the more conventional thriller subjects on which he worked in America have proved less popular than *The African Queen* and *Moulin Rouge*, both of which, in script form, must have looked like considerable box-office risks. These apparent contradictions are spectacular evidence of Huston's authentic flair for entertainment. Whether the exercise of this flair has proved beneficial to the qualities of his films is another question. One of the great assets of his American pictures was the extent to which they reflected their environment: they were contemporary, and they were American. The characters of *Moulin Rouge* and *Beat the Devil* appear artificial precisely because of an impression that the director is seeing them only from the outside. It is not merely that Huston, like some other film-makers, seems to produce his best work in the more austere surroundings of a Hollywood studio; more important is the lack of an environment, of that assurance and understanding which gave his earlier films their particular distinction.

IV

Another of the major figures of the American cinema, a director capable of alternating the mediocre with the extraordinarily good, has added nothing to his reputation with two films made in British studios. One would scarcely have recognised the florid, artificial *Melba* (written, incidentally, by another American, Harry Kurnitz, who was responsible for the rather jaded scripts of *The Man Between* and *The Love Lottery*) as a promising subject for Lewis Milestone. *They Who Dare*, though, seemed a great deal more hopeful. Milestone on war has never been less than interesting, and this story of a

commando-style raid on the island of Rhodes, in which tensions among a small, oddly-assorted group of men ran parallel to the action, seemed somewhat reminiscent in theme of the memorable *A Walk in the Sun*. But the director appeared to react more vigorously to the Greek mountain settings than to the story. As an adventure story, the film appeared implausible and roughly constructed, though shots of the Italian troops advancing across country were handled with some of Milestone's old flair; as a study of men under strain, it depended on the hostility between the allegedly daring young officer (Dirk Bogarde) and his intellectual sergeant (Denholm Elliott). This conflict, expressed mainly in schoolboyish outbursts, came disquietingly close to the well-worn American theme of love-hate on the battlefield; Milestone, one felt, was out of touch with the idiom of his characters, and was given little help by Robert Westerby's script. He depends more perhaps than most directors of his calibre on a subject to which he really responds, and on a strongly-defined script; these, so far, his European employers have failed to give him.

These, of course, are not the only Americans to yield to the attractions and temptations of European film-making. There was, for instance, Dieterle's *Volcano* (with Anna Magnani), a lowering melodrama which achieved the doubtful distinction of being rather better than *Stromboli*. Anatole Litvak's *Act of Love*, not yet seen in Britain, is set in Paris and apparently surrenders to the lure of the romantic location. And there remain the two much-discussed and long-delayed productions—the Selznick-de Sica *Terminal Station* and Gene Kelly's *Invitation to the Dance*.

V

If the more serious directors have failed in their films authentically to come to terms with the European scene, the American companies have meanwhile presented some odd, occasionally diverting, views of contemporary Britain—one remembers the wildly inexact story of low life with which Jules Dassin attempted to make London the scene for another *Naked City*; the tribute to the British house-

wife in which Mrs. Miniver, the symbol of middle-class fortitude, briskly solved her family's problems before succumbing to a lingering disease; the sensational *Another Man's Poison* (American-directed for a British company), with Bette Davis rampaging in riding breeches around the Yorkshire moors. And, although European locations usually dominate the undistinguished stories set in them (*The Devil Makes Three*, *The Light Touch*, *September Affair*), Wyler's *Roman Holiday*, a highly professional piece of Hollywood film-making, contrived a pleasing balance by setting a Ruritanian romance in elegantly photographed Roman locations. For the most part, however, the American companies find England a useful setting for the period pieces—*Captain Hornblower*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Ivanhoe*—where the English accents of the small-part players will not distress the Middle West audiences and scenery can on occasion be used to advantage.

VI

I said earlier in this article that Hollywood demands of directors from abroad merely that they accept its disciplines. The situation in Europe is less clear-cut; there exist fewer production organisations into which the director can easily be fitted; different problems arise with every picture; the Americans, in any case, perhaps come only to make one or two films. But these conditions, in effect an encouragement to independent production, might be expected to act as a stimulus. Instead, it is difficult not to regard the record of the American directors in Europe as at least a partial vindication of the disciplines of the Hollywood system.

What we would like of the Americans in Europe is, of course, something more complex and less definable; perhaps that they should not make films merely in Europe but *about* Europe; that they should respond to an atmosphere as Zinnemann responded to a situation in *The Search*. We would like, in other words, not an Eliot or a James, but, to revert to the title of this article, perhaps a Lambert Strether.

"Beat the Devil": Robert Morley, Jennifer Jones, Gina Lollobrigida and others arrive in Africa.



Humphrey Jennings (left)
on location.



ONLY CONNECT

Some aspects of the work of Humphrey Jennings

Lindsay Anderson

IT is difficult to write anything but personally about the films of Humphrey Jennings. This is not of course to say that a full and documented account of his work in the cinema would not be of the greatest interest: anyone who undertook such a study would certainly merit our gratitude. But the sources are diffuse. Friends and colleagues would have to be sought out and questioned; poems and paintings tracked down; and, above all, the close texture of the films themselves would have to be exhaustively examined. My aim must be more modest, merely hoping to stimulate by offering some quite personal reactions, and by trying to explain why I think these pictures are so good.

Jennings' films are all documentaries, all made firmly within the framework of the British documentary movement. This fact ought not to strike a chill, for surely "the creative interpretation of actuality" should suggest an exciting, endlessly intriguing use of the cinema; and yet it must be admitted that the overtones of the term are not immediately attractive. Indeed it comes as something of a surprise to learn that this unique and fascinating artist was from the beginning of his career in films an inside member of Grierson's G.P.O. Unit (with which he first worked in 1934), and made all his best films as official, sponsored propaganda during the second world

war. His subjects were thus, at least on the surface, the common ones; yet his manner of expression was always individual, and became more and more so. It was a style that bore the closest possible relationship to his theme—to that aspect of his subjects which his particular vision caused him consistently to stress. It was, that is to say, a poetic style. In fact it might reasonably be contended that Humphrey Jennings is the only real poet the British cinema has yet produced.

II

He started directing films in 1939 (we may leave out of account an insignificant experiment in 1935, in collaboration with Len Lye); and the date is significant, for it was the war that fertilised his talent and created the conditions in which his best work was produced. Watching one of Jennings' early pictures, *Speaking From America*, which was made to explain the workings of the transatlantic radio-telephone system, one would hardly suspect the personal qualities that characterise the pictures he was making only a short while later. There seems to have been more evidence of these in *Spare Time*, a film on the use of leisure among industrial workers: a mordant sequence of a carnival procession, drab and shoddy, in a Northern city aroused the wrath of more orthodox documentarians, and Basil Wright has mentioned other

scenes, more sympathetically shot—"the pigeon-fancier, the 'lurcher-loving collier' and the choir rehearsal are all important clues to Humphrey's development". Certainly such an affectionate response to simple pleasures is more characteristic of Jennings' later work than any emphasis of satire.

If there had been no war, though, could that development ever have taken place? Humphrey Jennings was never happy with narrowly propagandist subjects, any more than he was with the technical exposition of *Speaking From America*. But in wartime people become important, and observation of them is regarded in itself as a justifiable subject for filming, without any more specific "selling angle" than their sturdiness of spirit. Happily, this was the right subject for Jennings. With Cavalcanti, Harry Watt and Pat Jackson he made *The First Days*, a picture of life on the home front in the early months of the war. On his own, he then directed *Spring Offensive*, about farming and the new development of agricultural land in the Eastern counties; in 1940 he worked again with Harry Watt on *London Can Take It*, another picture of the home front; and in 1941, with *Heart of Britain*, he showed something of the way in which the people of Northern industrial Britain were meeting the challenge of war.

These films did their jobs well, and social historians of the future will find in them much that makes vivid the atmosphere and manners of their period. Ordinary people are sharply glimpsed in them, and the ordinary sounds that were part of the fabric of their lives reinforce the glimpses and sometimes comment on them: a lorry-load of youthful conscripts speeds down the road in blessed ignorance of the future, as a jaunty singer gives out *We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried line*. In the films which Jennings made in collaboration, it is risky, of course, to draw attention too certainly to any particular feature as being his: yet here and there are images and effects which unmistakably betray his sensibility. Immense women knitting furiously for the troops; a couple of cockney mothers commenting to each other on the quietness of the streets now that the children have gone; the King and Queen unostentatiously shown inspecting the air raid damage in their own back garden. *Spring Offensive*

is less sure in its touch, rather awkward in its staged conversations and rather over-elaborate in its images; *Heart of Britain* plainly offered a subject that Jennings found more congenial. Again the sense of human contact is direct: a steel-worker discussing his A.R.P. duty with his mate, a sturdy matron of the W.V.S. looking straight at us through the camera as she touchingly describes her pride at being able to help the rescue workers, if only by serving cups of tea. And along with these plain, spontaneous encounters come telling shots of landscape and background, amplifying and reinforcing. A style, in fact, is being hammered out in these films; a style based on a peculiar intimacy of observation, a fascination with the commonplace thing or person that is significant precisely because it is commonplace, and with the whole pattern that can emerge when such commonplace, significant things and people are fitted together in the right order.

Although it is evident that the imagination at work in all these early pictures is instinctively a cinematic one, in none of them does one feel that the imagination is working with absolute freedom. All the films are accompanied by commentaries, in some cases crudely propagandist, in others serviceable and decent enough; but almost consistently these off-screen words clog and impede the progress of the picture. The images are so justly chosen, and so explicitly assembled, that there is nothing for the commentator to say. The effect—particularly if we have Jennings' later achievements in mind—is cramped. The material is there, the elements are assembled; but the fusion does not take place that alone can create the poetic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. And then comes the last sequence of *Heart of Britain*. The Huddersfield Choral Society rises before Malcolm Sargent, and the homely, buxom housewives, the black-coated workers, and the men from the mills burst into the Hallelujah Chorus. The sound of their singing continues, and we see landscapes and noble buildings, and then a factory where bombers are being built. Back and forth go these contrasting, conjunctive images, until the music broadens out to its conclusion, the roar of engines joins in, and the bombers take off. The sequence is not a long one, and there are unfortunate intrusions from the commentator, but the effect is extraordinary, and the implications obvious. Jennings has found his style.

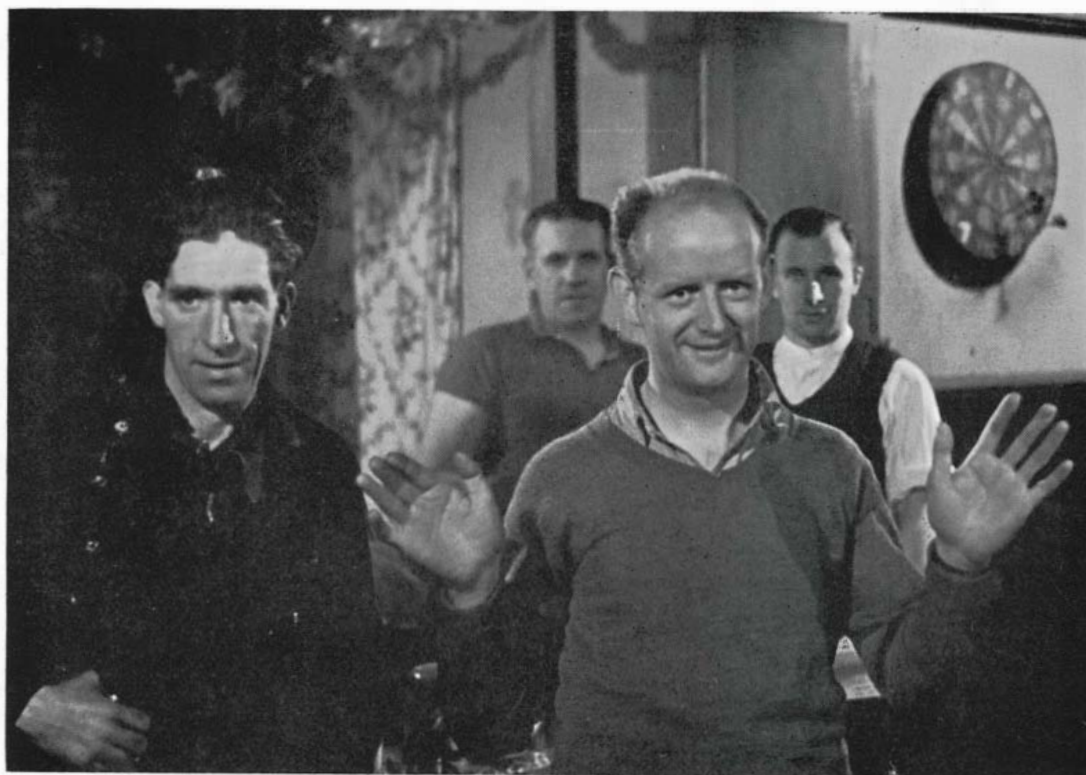
III

Words For Battle, Listen to Britain, Fires Were Started, A Diary For Timothy. To the enthusiast for Jennings these titles have a ring which makes it a pleasure simply to speak them, or to set them down in writing; for these are the films in which, between 1941 and 1945, we can see that completely individual style developing from tentative discovery and experiment to mature certainty. They are all films of Britain at war, and yet their feeling is never, or almost never, warlike. They are committed to the war—for all his sensibility there does not seem to have been anything of the pacifist about Jennings—but their real inspiration is pride, an unaggressive pride in the courage and doggedness of ordinary British people. Kathleen Raine, a friend of Jennings and his contemporary at Cambridge, has written: "What counted for Humphrey was the expression, by certain people, of the ever-growing spirit of man; and, in particular, of the spirit of England".



"London Can Take It"

"Fires Were Started".



It is easy to see how the atmosphere of the country at war could stimulate and inspire an artist so bent. For it is at such a time that the spirit of a country becomes manifest, the sense of tradition and community sharpened as (alas) it rarely is in time of peace. "*He sought therefore for a public imagery, a public poetry*". In a country at war we are all members one of another, in a sense that is obvious to the least spiritually-minded.

"Only connect". It is surely no coincidence that Jennings chose for his writer on *A Diary for Timothy* the wise and kindly humanist who had placed that epigraph on the title page of his best novel. The phrase at any rate is apt to describe not merely the film on which Jennings worked with E. M. Forster, but this whole series of pictures which he made during the war. He had a mind that delighted in simile and the unexpected relationship. ("*It was he*", wrote Grierson, "*who discovered the Louis Quinze properties of a Lyons' swiss roll*".) On a deeper level, he loved to link one event with another, the past with the present, person to person. Thus the theme of *Words for Battle* is the interpretation of great poems of the past through events of the present—a somewhat artificial idea, though brilliantly executed. It is perhaps significant, though, that the film springs to a new kind of life altogether in its last sequence, as the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg are followed by the clatter of tanks driving into Parliament Square past the Lincoln statue: the sound of the tanks merges in turn into the grand music of Handel, and suddenly the camera is following a succession of men and women in uniform, striding along the pavement cheery and casual, endowed by the music, by the urgent rhythm of the cutting, and by the solemnity of what has gone before (to which we feel they are heirs) with an astonishing and breathtaking dignity, a mortal splendour.

As if taking its cue from the success of this wonderful

passage, *Listen to Britain* dispenses with commentary altogether. Here the subject is simply the sights and sounds of wartime Britain over a period of some twenty-four hours. To people who have not seen the film it is difficult to describe its fascination—something quite apart from its purely nostalgic appeal to anyone who lived through those years in this country. The picture is a stylistic triumph (Jennings shared the credit with his editor, Stewart McAllister), a succession of marvellously evocative images freely linked by contrasting and complementary sounds; and yet it is not for its quality of form that one remembers it most warmly, but for the continuous sensitivity of its human regard. It is a fresh and loving eye that Jennings turns on to those Canadian soldiers, singing to an accordion to while away a long train journey; or on to that jolly factory girl singing "Yes, my Darling Daughter" at her machine; or on to the crowded floor of the Blackpool Tower Ballroom; or the beautiful, sad-faced woman who is singing "The Ash Grove" at an ambulance station piano. Emotion in fact (it is something one often forgets) can be conveyed as unmistakably through the working of a film camera as by the manipulation of pen or paint brush. To Jennings this was a transfigured landscape, and he recorded its transfiguration on film.

The latter two of these four films, *Fires Were Started* and *A Diary For Timothy*, are more ambitious in conception: the second runs for about forty minutes, and the first is a full-length "feature-documentary". One's opinion as to which of them is Jennings' masterpiece is likely to vary according to which of them one has most recently seen. *Fires Were Started* (made in 1943) is a story of one particular unit of the National Fire Service during one particular day and night in the middle of the London blitz: in the morning the men leave their homes

(Continued on page 186)

A Sequence from *A Diary for Timothy*

The characters have been introduced, and the theme of the film established—a poetic summary of life in Britain during the last year of the war. This sequence covers the late summer and autumn of 1944. (Only those shots which are *not* illustrated are described. The commentary is italicised.)

1. . . . *And you didn't know, and couldn't know; and didn't care. Safe in your pram.*
A bugle call sounds, faintly.
2. **L.S. Quarry.** A group of miners some distance away are looking at a newspaper.
But listen, Tim; listen to this.
The call continues.
3. Bugle call swells up.
4. **The headline of the newspaper flapping in the wind: the word ARNHEM.**
Bugle call fades under the voice of a B.B.C. war reporter, Australian accented.
About five miles to the west of Arnhem. . . .
5. **A wireless set.** The camera tracks in.
. . . in a space 1,500 yards by 900 on that last day I saw the dead and the living. . . .
6. **A working class family group gathered round their wireless.**
. . . those who fought the good fight and kept the faith with you at home, and those who still fought magnificently on. They were the last of the few.
7. **C.U. wireless set speaker.**
I last saw them yesterday morning, as they dribbled into Nimegen.
8. *They had staggered and walked and waded all night from Arnhem, about ten miles north. We were busy asking each other if this or that one had been seen.*
9. **C.U. another wireless.**
Late in the afternoon before, we were told that the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division were going to pull out that night.
10. **C.U. Tim's mother listening.**
Perhaps I should remind you here that these were men of no ordinary calibre. They'd been nine days in that little space I mentioned, being mortared and shelled, machine-gunned and sniped from all round.
11. **C.U. another wireless.**
For the last three days they had had no water, very little but small arms ammunition, and rations cut to one-sixth.
12. *Luckily or unluckily it rained, and they caught the water in their capes and drank that. These last items were never mentioned: they were Airborne weren't they; they were tough and knew it. All right: water and rations didn't matter—give them some Germans to kill, and one chance in ten, and they'd get along somehow.*
At "water and rations" the sound of Beethoven's Appassionata sonata creeps in softly.
13. **Camera tracks back from keyboard.**
The Appassionata: forte chords on cut.
14. **L.S. Platform at a National Gallery concert.** Myra Hess at piano.
Appassionata continues.
15. Appassionata continues through the rest of this sequence, to shot 27.
16. **Poster announcing Fifth Birthday Concert at the National Gallery.**
17. **Camera tracks along a row of listening faces.**
18. **M.S. Myra Hess at piano.** Camera tracks in to her hands.
Under music B.B.C. commentator's voice is faded up, repeating:
. . . Luckily or unluckily it rained, and they caught the water in their capes and drank that . . .
19. Sudden forte in music precipitates cut.
20. **L.S. Another static water tank in London street.**
21. **Bombed roofs of London houses.**
It's the middle of October now. . . .
Appassionata continuing under commentary.
22. **A builder mending slates on a bombed roof.**
And the war certainly won't be over by Christmas. And the weather doesn't suit us. . . .
23. **Another roof mender.**
And one-third of all our houses have been damaged by enemy action.
The sound of the workman's hammer pierces the music.
24. *Did you like the music that lady was playing? Some of us think it is the greatest music in the world. Yet it's German music, and we're fighting the Germans.*
At "some of us think . . ." the pianist's hands are superimposed over the image of roofmenders.
25. **C.U. Pianist's hands.**
There's something you'll have to think over later on.
26. **The wet surface of a road; the legs of a man leading a pony pass diagonally across frame.**
Sound of water trickling merges with Appassionata.
Rain . . . too much rain.
27. **A miner at the coal face.**
It's even wet under the earth.
The Appassionata is lost under the sound of picking.
28. **A miner heaps coal on to a conveyor.**
Look at the place where Goronwy has to cut coal.
The fierce sound of drilling on the cut.
29. **C.S. Drill.**
Drilling continues.
30. *And you—all warm and sleepy in your cot by the fire. . . .*
The subdued sound of rain trickling down a window pane.



1.



3.



8.



12.

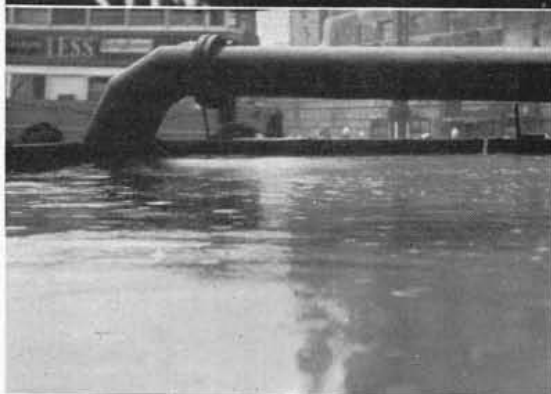


13.

15.



19.



24.



28.



30.



and civil occupations, their taxi-cabs, newspaper shops, advertising agencies, to start their tour of duty; a new recruit arrives and is shown the ropes; warning comes in that a heavy attack is expected; night falls and the alarms begin to wail; the unit is called out to action at a riverside warehouse, where fire threatens an ammunition ship drawn up at the wharf; the fire is mastered; a man is lost; the ship sails with the morning tide. In outline it is the simplest of pictures; in treatment it is of the greatest subtlety, richly poetic in feeling, intense with tenderness and admiration for the unassuming heroes whom it honours. Yet it is not merely the members of the unit who are given this depth and dignity of treatment. Somehow every character we see, however briefly, is made to stand out sharply and memorably in his or her own right: the brisk and cheery girl who arrives with the dawn on the site of the fire to serve tea to the men from her mobile canteen; a girl in the control room forced under her desk by a near-miss, and apologising down the telephone which she still holds in her hand as she picks herself up; two isolated aircraft-spotters watching the flames of London miles away through the darkness. No other British film made during the war, documentary or feature, achieved such a continuous and poignant truthfulness, or treated the subject of men at war with such a sense of its incidental glories and its essential tragedy.

The idea of connexion, by contrast and juxtaposition, is always present in *Fires Were Started*—never more powerfully than in the beautiful closing sequence, where the fireman's sad little funeral is intercut against the ammunition ship moving off down the river—but its general movement necessarily conforms to the basis of narrative. *A Diary For Timothy*, on the other hand, is constructed entirely to a pattern of relationships and contrasts, endlessly varying, yet each one contributing to the rounded poetic statement of the whole. It is a picture of the last year of the war, as it was lived through by people in Britain; at the start a baby, Timothy, is born, and it is to him that the film is addressed. Four representative characters are picked out (if we except Tim himself and his mother, to both of whom we periodically return): an engine driver, a farmer, a Welsh miner and a wounded fighter pilot. But the story is by no means restricted to scenes involving these; with dazzling virtuosity, linking detail to detail by continuously striking associations of image, sound, music and comment, the film ranges freely over the life of the nation, connecting and connecting. National tragedies and personal tragedies, individual happinesses and particular beauties are woven together in a design of the utmost complexity: the miner is injured in a fall at the coal face, the fighter pilot gets better and goes back to his unit, the Arnheim strike fails, Myra Hess plays Beethoven at the National Gallery, bombs fall over Germany, and Tim yawns in his cot.

Such an apparently haphazard selection of details could mean nothing or everything. Some idea of the poetic method by which Jennings gave the whole picture its continual sense of emotion and significance may perhaps be given by the sequence analysed and illustrated here, but of course only the film can really speak for itself. The difficulty of writing about such a film, of disengaging in the memory the particular images and sounds (sounds moreover which are constantly overlapping and mixing

with each other), from the overall design has been remarked on by Dilys Powell: "*It is the general impression which remains; only with an effort do you separate the part from the whole . . . the communication is always through a multitude of tiny impressions, none in isolation particularly memorable*". Only with the last point would one disagree. *A Diary For Timothy* is so tensely constructed, its progression is so swift and compulsive, its associations and implications so multifarious, that it is almost impossible, at least for the first few viewings, to catch and hold on to particular impressions. Yet the impressions themselves are rarely unmemorable, not merely for their splendid pictorial quality, but for the intimate and loving observation of people, the devoted concentration on the gestures and expressions, the details of dress or behaviour that distinguish each unique human being from another. Not least among the virtues that distinguish Jennings from almost all British film-makers is his respect for personality, his freedom from the inhibitions of class-consciousness, his inability to patronise or merely to use the people in his films. Jennings' people are ends in themselves.

IV

Other films were made by Jennings during the war, and more after it, up to his tragic death in 1950; but I have chosen to concentrate on what I feel to be his best work, most valuable to us. He had his theme, which was Britain; and nothing else could stir him to quite the same response. With more conventional subjects—*The Story of Lilli Marlene*, *A Defeated People*, *The Cumberland Story*—he was obviously unhappy, and, despite his brilliance at capturing the drama of real life, the staged sequences in these films do not suggest that he would have been at ease in the direction of features. *The Silent Village*—his reconstruction of the story of Lidice in a Welsh mining village—bears this out; for all the fond simplicity with which he sets his scene, the necessary sense of conflict and suffering is missed in his over-refined, under-dramatised treatment of the essential situation. It may be maintained that Jennings' peacetime return to the theme of Britain (*The Dim Little Island* in 1949, and *Family Portrait* in 1950) produced work that can stand beside his wartime achievement, and certainly neither of these two beautifully finished films is to be dismissed. But they lack passion.

By temperament Jennings was an intellectual artist, perhaps too intellectual for the cinema. (It is interesting to find Miss Raine reporting that, "*Julian Trevelyan used to say that Humphrey's intellect was too brilliant for a painter*"). It needed the hot blast of war to warm him to passion, to quicken his symbols to emotional as well as intellectual significance. His symbols in *Family Portrait*—the Long Man of Wilmington, Beachy Head, the mythical horse of Newmarket—what do they really mean to us? Exquisitely presented though it is, the England of those films is nearer the "This England" of the pre-war beer advertisements and Mr. Castleton Knight's coronation film than to the murky and undecided realities of today. For reality, his wartime films stand alone; and they are sufficient achievement. They will last because they are true to their time, and because the depth of feeling in them can never fail to communicate itself. They will speak for us to posterity, saying: "This is what it was like. This is what we were like—the best of us."

GARBO

Kenneth Tynan



Garbo in "Anna Karenina".

WHAT, when drunk, one sees in other women, one sees in Garbo sober. She is woman apprehended with all the pulsating clarity of one of Aldous Huxley's mescaline jags. To watch her is to achieve direct, cleansed perception of something which, like a flower or a fold of silk, is raptly, unassertively and beautifully itself. Nothing intrudes between her and the observer except the observer's neuroses: her contribution is calm and receptiveness, an absorbent repose which normally, in women, coexists only with the utmost vanity. Tranced by the ecstasy of existing, she gives to each onlooker what he needs: her largesse is intarissable. Most actresses in action live only to look at men, but Garbo looks at flowers, clouds and furniture with the same admiring compassion, like Eve on the morning of creation, and better cast than Mr. Huxley as Adam. Fame, by insulating her against a multitude of experiences which we take for granted, has increased rather than diminished her capacity for wonder. In England two years ago she visited Westminster Abbey, early one morning when no one was about, and in this most public of places found a source of enormous private enchantment. A walk along a busy street is for her a semi-mystical adventure. Like a Martian guest, she questions you about your everyday life, infecting you with her eagerness, shaming you into a heightened sensitivity. Conversing with her, you feel like Ramon Novarro, blinded in *Mata Hari*, to whom she said: "Here are your eyes," and touched her own.

I half-believed, until I met her, the old hilarious slander which whispered that she was a brilliant Swedish female

impersonator who had kept up the pretence too long; behind the dark glasses, it was hinted, beneath the wild brown hair, there lurked the features of a proud Scandinavian diplomat, now proclaiming their masculinity so stridently that exposure to cameras was out of the question. This idle fabrication was demolished within seconds of her entering the room; sidelong, a little tentative, like an animal thrust under a searchlight, she advanced, put out a hand in greeting, murmured something muted and sibilant to express her pleasure, and then, gashing her mouth into a grin, expunged all doubt. This was a girl, all right. It is an indication of the mystery which surrounds her that I felt pleased even to have ascertained her sex.

"Are you all things to all men?" someone asks her in *Two-Faced Woman*; to which the honest reply (I forget the scripted one) would be: "To all men, women and children." Garbo, Hepburn and Dietrich are perhaps the only screen personalities for whom such a claim could seriously be made. "She has sex, but no particular gender," I once wrote of Dietrich, "her masculinity appeals to women, and her sexuality to men"; which is also true of Hepburn. Yet Garbo transcends both of them. Neither Hepburn nor Dietrich could have played Garbo's scenes with her son in *Anna Karenina*; something predatory in them would have forbidden such selfless maternal raptures. Garbo alone can be intoxicated by innocence. She turns her coevals into her children, taking them under her wing like a great, sailing swan. Her love is thus larger than Hepburn's or Dietrich's, which does



Garbo in the 'twenties.

not extend beyond the immediately desired object. It was Alistair Cooke who pointed out that in her films she seemed to see life in reverse, and, because she was aware of the fate in store for them, offered the shelter of her sympathy to all around her. Through the cellophane *kitsch* (how it dates!) of the Lubitsch Touch she pierced, in *Ninotchka*, to affirm her pity for the human condition. The words were addressed to Melvyn Douglas, but we all knew for whom they were really intended, and glowed in the knowledge: "Bomps will fall, civilisations will crumble—but *not yet*. . . . *Give us our moment!*" She seemed to be pleading the world's cause, and to be winning, too. Often, during the decade in which she talked to us, she gave signs that she was on the side of life against darkness: they seeped through a series of banal, barrel-scraping scripts like code messages borne through enemy lines. Sometimes, uttering sentences which were plainly designed to speed the end of literature, she could convey her universal charity only in glimpses, such as, for instance, a half-mocking, half-despairing catch in the wine-dark voice. Round the militant bluster of M-G-M dialogue she wrapped a Red Cross bandage of humanity.

It is likely that too many volumes have been read into and written about her, and that every additional adulatory word reinforces the terror I am sure she feels at the thought of having to face us again and measure up to the legend. Possibly we exaggerated her intelligence from the beginning; perhaps she was perfectly happy with the velvet-hung, musk-scented tin lizzies which Salka Viertel and S. N. Behrman (among others) turned out as vehicles for her. Perhaps association with Lewis Stone and Reginald Owen, a stout pair of uncle-substitutes who crop up, variously bewigged, in many of her films, was vitally necessary to inspire her. Recall, too, that Carl Brisson and John Gilbert are known to have been high on her list of ideal men; and that we have no evidence that she has ever read a book. Except physically, we know little more about Garbo than we know about Shakespeare. She looks, in fact, about thirty-four, but

her date of birth is disputable; the textbooks oscillate between 1905 and 1906, and one biography ungallantly plumps for 1903, which may, of course, be the wound left by an embittered typesetter. Stockholm cradled her, and, like Anna Christie, she was the daughter of an impoverished sailor. She had a brother and two sisters, left school at fourteen, entered the newly expanding Swedish film industry, and was discovered by Mauritz Stiller. After the completion of *Gosta Berling* in 1924 her life is a list of movies, twelve silent, fourteen talking, and a file of newspaper pictures, catching her aghast and raincoated, grey-faced and weirdly hatted, on the gangplanks of ships or the stairways to 'planes. We often know where she is going, but never why. Occasionally a man is with her, a sort of Kafkaesque guard, employed to escort her to her next inscrutable rendezvous. Baffled, we consult the astrologers, who tell us that those born, as she was, between the end of August and the end of September are almost bound to be perfectionists; but what, we are left sighing, is she perfecting?

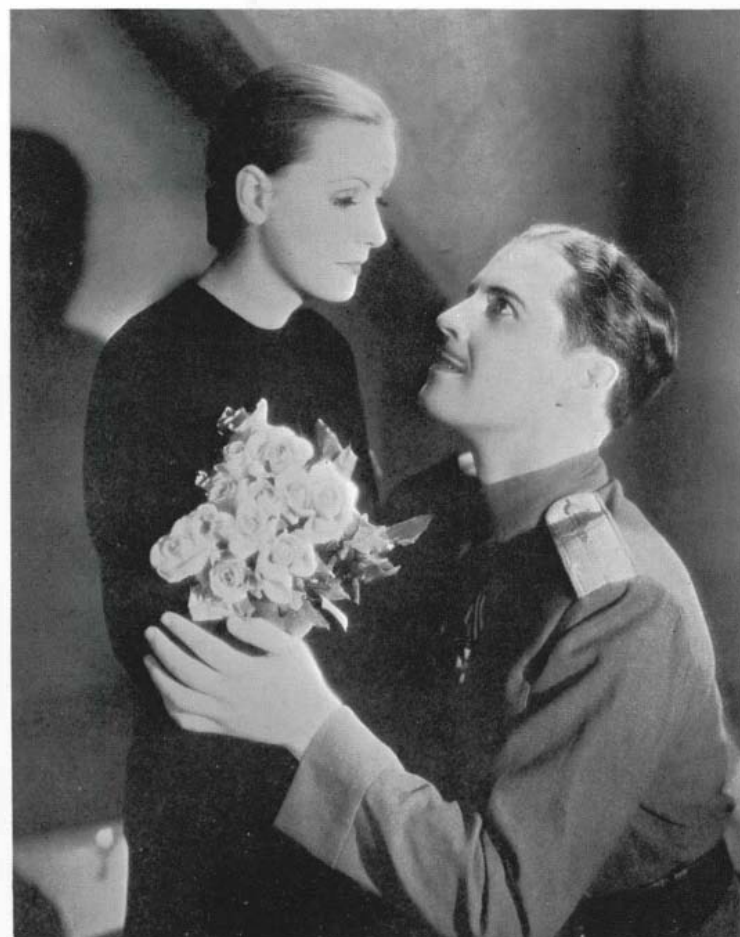
She changed her name from Gustafsson to Garbo, the Swedish word for a sprite. I used to think the Spanish "garbo" an insult to her, having heard it applied to matadors whose work seemed to me no more than pretty or neat. A Hispanophile friend has lately corrected me: "garbo," he writes, "is animal grace sublimated—the flaunting of an assured natural charm, poise infected by *joie de vivre*, innate, high-spirited, controlled, the essentially female attribute (even in bullfighters). . . ." In short, "garbo" is Garbo without the melancholy, with no intimations of mortality. The word describes the embryo, the capital letter invests it with a soul. It is the difference between *Gosta Berling* and *Anna Karenina*.

But here again I am acquiescing in the myth of gloom. Long before the fit of hoarse hysterics which convulsed her when Melvyn Douglas fell off his chair, Garbo had laughed, even if it was only "wild laughter in the throat of death," and made us laugh too. She was never wholly austere. Posing as a man in the tavern scene of *Queen Christina*, how blithely she made us smile at her awkwardness when asked to share a bedroom with the Spanish ambassador! A secret heart-smile, with the lips drawn back as if bobbing for apples, was always her least resistible weapon. Her gaiety coalesced, to the dismay of academic distinctions, with plangency. Her retirement is unforgivable if only because it means that now we shall never see her Masha in *The Three Sisters*, a part Chekhov might have written for her. It takes lesser actresses to express a single emotion, mirth or mirthlessness. Garbo's most radiant grins were belied always by the anxiety in the antennæ-like eyebrows; and by the angle of her head she could effect a transition, not alone of mood, but of age. When it was tilted back, with the mouth sagging open, she was a child joyously anticipating a sweet; when it was tipped forward, the mouth still agape, she became a parent wide-eyed at her child's newest exploit.

Some of her impact, certainly, was derived from the exoticism of her accent; here was probably the first Swedish voice that many a million filmgoers had ever heard. Anglo-Saxons are notoriously prone to ascribe messianic characteristics to any stranger with a Slavic, Teutonic or Nordic intonation; Bergner and Bergman are examples that come to mind, and the history of the London stage is punctuated with shrieks of exultation over



Garbo and her leading men : above, with von Stroheim in *As You Desire Me* ; right, with Ramon Novarro in *Mata Hari* ; below, with John Gilbert in *Queen Christina*.



long-forgotten soubrettes with names like Marta Kling, Svenda Stellmar or Ljuba Van Strusi. Garbo was unquestionably assisted by the fact that she had to be cast, more often than not, as an exile: how often, to go about her business of home-wrecking, she arrives by train from afar! The smoke clears, revealing the emissary of fate, hungrily licking her lips. The displaced person always inspires curiosity: who displaced her, what forces drove her from her native land? If it was Garbo's luck to provoke these enquiries, it was her gift which answered them. The impulse behind her voyage was romantic passion. Bergner might have left home to collect Peking, Bergman to go on a hiking tour: Garbo could only have journeyed to escape or to seek a lover. Which is, as a line in *Ninotchka* has it, "a netchul impulse common to all."

Superficially, she changed very little in the course of her career; a certain solidity in her aspect suggested, at the very end, a spiritualised reworking of Irene Dunne, but that was all. She could still (and often did) fling her head flexibly back at right-angles to her spine, and she kissed as thirstily as ever, cupping her man's head in both hands and seeming very nearly to drink from it. And her appeal never lost its ambiguity. The after-dinner cooch-dance which drives Lionel Barrymore to hit the bottle in *Mata Hari* reveals an oddly androgynous physique, with strong-kneed legs as "capable," in their way, as the spatulate fingers: nothing is here of Herrick's "fleshie Principalities." Pectorally, the eye notes a subsidence hardly distinguishable from concavity: the art that conceals art could scarcely go further. If this undenominational temple-dance is seductive (and, like the swimming-pool sequence in *Two-Faced Woman*, it is), the explanation lies in our awareness that we are watching a real, imperfectly shaped human being, and not a market-fattened glamour-symbol.

I dwell on Garbo's physical attributes because I think

the sensual side of acting is too often under-rated: too much is written about how actors feel, too little about how they look. Garbo's looks, and especially her carriage, always set up a marvellous dissonance with what she was saying. The broad ivory yoke of her shoulders belonged to a javelin-thrower; she walked obliquely, seeming to sidle even when she strode, like a middle-weight boxer approaching an opponent: how could this athletic port enshrine so frail and suppliant a spirit? Queen Christina, reputedly her favourite character, is encased for several reels in masculine garb, and when besought by her counsellors to marry, she replies: "I shall die a bachelor!" And think of: "I am Mata Hari—I am my own master!" To lines like these Garbo could impart an enigmatic wit which nobody else could conceivably have carried off. Deficient in all the surface frills of femininity, she replaced them with a male directness. Her Marie Walewska was as lion-hearted as Napoleon himself, and I have heard her described as "Charlemagne's Aunt." Her independence (in the last analysis) of either sex is responsible for the cryptic amorality of her performances. In most of the characters she played the only discernible moral imperative is loyalty, an animal rather than a human virtue—that "natural sense of honour" which, as Shaw says, "is nowhere mentioned in the Bible."

"Animal grace sublimated": I return to my correspondent's phrase. If it is true (as I think it is) that none of Garbo's clothes ever appear to be meant for her, much less to fit her, that is because her real state is not in clothes at all. Her costumes hamper her, whether they are stoles, or redingotes, or (as on one occasion) moiré, sequinned, principal-boy tights. She implies a nakedness which is bodily as well as spiritual. It is foolish to complain that, basically, she gave but one performance throughout her life. She has only one body, and in this incarnation that is all we can expect.

(Continued on page 220)

The Russian envoy discovers Paris : Garbo and Melvyn Douglas in "Ninotchka".



THE ADVENT OF LEVIATHAN

(1927-1936)

Duncan Crow

I DO not remember what title was given to that period of antiquity which followed on the Golden Age, nor am I conversant enough with the Old Testament to date the various appearances of Leviathan; nevertheless it is clear that in the history of the British film industry the First Golden Age (about which I wrote in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*) was followed by the Age of Leviathan—that is to say, by a period during which the structure of the industry underwent a fundamental change, and from which it emerged in its present oligarchic form.

The organisation of the British industry today has three main characteristics. These are: first, the importance of American interests; second, the extent of Government intervention; and third, the power of the large combines. The evidence of American interests is apparent to any film-goer in the number of American films which are shown in British cinemas. Government intervention in the affairs of the industry can be seen in the Cinematograph Films Act with its quota requirements, in the existence of the National Film Finance Corporation, and in the peremptory encouragement given to the industry's continuation of the British Film Production Fund. The power of the large combines is perhaps less patent to the layman, but it is nonetheless a dominant fact in the contemporary film world. As an instance, it may be cited that the Rank Group (with its Odeon and Gaumont-British circuits) and the Associated British Picture Corporation between them own about 20 per cent of the cinemas in this country, with one-third of the total seating capacity, and that these cinemas take just over two-fifths of the country's gross box-office receipts. Nor is this power confined to exhibition interests, important as those are. In distribution, studio-ownership and in production the groups also play a leading role in the industry today.

Looking now at the history of the industry as a whole, we can divide it into four main periods: up to 1918, from 1918 to 1928, from 1928 to 1948, and from 1948 to the present day. In cavalier fashion we may dismiss the first period as one of antiquarian interest only—a period when the cinematograph was in its adolescence, changing from its childhood as a showman's novelty into the full manhood of a major industry. During this period the personality of the film business was unformed, and none of the three main characteristics is to be found except in rudimentary essence. In each of the succeeding periods, however, one of these characteristics has made its influence dominant and this dominance has resulted in the development of one of the other characteristics. Thus between 1918 and 1928 the power of the American industry in the British market grew to such proportions that the Government was eventually obliged to pass the first Quota Act, in an endeavour to save British production from extinction. This object was achieved. As it turned out, however, it was not Government intervention which became the dominant characteristic of the next period

(1928-1948); that influence was to wait until the current period of film history. Instead, the passing of the Quota Act brought about the advent of Leviathan.

II

The first of the large groups to be formed was the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation in March, 1927—some months before official sanction had been given to the terms of the first Cinematograph Films Act, it is true, but not before the coming of protection had cast its shadow. For the Government had already intimated in the previous year that failure to arrange a voluntary scheme would only result in statutory action. The new corporation, which was backed by the important merchant banking house of the Ostrer Brothers, merged the interests of the Gaumont Company, Ideal Films and W & F Film Service. All three of these were important and well-established distribution companies, and in addition both Gaumont and Ideal had production units and studios—Gaumont at Shepherd's Bush and Ideal at Elstree. To these was added a small circuit of twenty-one cinemas, so that the corporation started into life with an interest in every branch of the film business.

The small circuit was only a beginning. In the following year two more exhibiting companies were formed to be associated with the group: Denman Picture Houses and the General Theatre Corporation. Altogether the group now controlled 187 cinemas, making it by far the largest circuit in the country. Second in importance was the Provincial Cinematograph Theatre circuit, with some hundred cinemas, but this soon ceased to be a competitor: in February, 1929, Gaumont-British obtained control of P.C.T. Ltd.

The position of Gaumont-British as the Leviathan of the industry did not remain unchallenged for long. In January, 1928, the formation of Associated British Cinemas Ltd. marked the arrival of the second major combine. This new company with its twenty-nine cinemas was controlled by British International Pictures, which, like Gaumont-British, had been formed early in 1927. B.I.P. Ltd. was the creation of John Maxwell, a Scottish solicitor who had been connected with the film business for a number of years, and who was chairman of the important distributing firm of Wardour Films Ltd. Wardour Films also had an allied production company with studios at Elstree, and later in 1927 Maxwell increased the renting and producing power of his group by becoming chairman of the old-established Pathé company. As with Gaumont-British, so with A.B.C. Ltd.: the small circuit was only a beginning. In 1929 the Maxwell group had increased its exhibiting interests to 88 cinemas; four years later, when the Associated British Picture Corporation was formed as the holding company for B.I.P. Ltd., British Instructional Films, Wardour, Pathé and A.B.C. Ltd., the group's circuit had grown to 147 cinemas.

Soon after Gaumont-British and Associated British had



Left, "The Private Life of Don Juan" (1934), with Douglas Fairbanks and Merle Oberon; Korda attempted to repeat the box-office triumph of "The Private Life of Henry VIII," but met with little success. Right, Barry Jones and Anne Grey in "Arms and the Man," an adaptation from Shaw produced by B.I.P. in 1932.

established themselves as giants of the industry in Britain, a third power began to exert itself. This was Odeon Theatres Ltd., formed in October, 1933, by Oscar Deutsch, a Birmingham industrialist who had first turned his attention to the distributing side of the film industry about eight years earlier. Starting, as the others had done, with a comparatively small circuit of twenty-six cinemas, Odeon rapidly became an exhibiting company of major proportions. Unlike the others, however, the increase in the Odeon circuit was carried out largely by the building of new cinemas rather than by the merging of established circuits. These cinemas introduced a new element into exhibition, for Deutsch was convinced that "brand-selling" would be just as profitable in the cinema business as in chain-store marketing. His cinemas were therefore built in like pattern, with similar façades and a common name. Furthermore they were "super-cinemas", comfortable and lavish (Deutsch's wife, incidentally, was responsible for a good deal of the interior decoration), and the aim was to build up a reputation for luxury among the patrons. The brand-selling of Odeon undoubtedly met with success.

Odeon differed from the two main groups, however, in a more important respect: it had no distributing and producing interests. This created a problem for Deutsch, because his elegant cinemas would be of no avail unless he was able to show the best films, and these films were being snapped up by his more powerful rivals. In an endeavour to solve the problem, Deutsch in 1936 came to an arrangement with one of the major American renting companies, United Artists; by its terms, Odeon was to have first call on all United Artists' films, and United Artists bought, for a nominal sum, half the ordinary shares in Odeon Theatres Ltd.

In order to appreciate the importance of this step as it must have appeared to Odeon's rivals at the time, it is necessary to introduce another character into the story. This was Alexander Korda, who, in 1932, formed London Film Productions (now the controlling company of British Lion Film Corporation) and subsequently built Denham

Studios. Korda rapidly became one of the most important British producers, distributing his films through United Artists, whose board he later joined. Thus the arrangement between Odeon and United Artists gave the semblance of another major combine. Nor does this brief outline show the full measure of that apparent power, for United Artists also had distribution agreements with other important producers and, before "buying" its way into Odeon, had become a substantial shareholder in the company controlling the County Cinema Circuit, which, with about fifty cinemas, was then the seventh largest in the country.

In the event, it was not the Odeon-United Artists group which produced the third large combine. That growth was to take place from 1936 onwards in the hands of J. Arthur Rank and a new finance group called the General Cinema Finance Corporation. It was an apt name, for the interests of the G.C.F.C. not only spread through all branches of the British industry but also became international. Today the Rank Group, which includes both Odeon and Gaumont-British, has become Leviathan itself.

III

From this kaleidoscope of structural change we must now turn to the course of British production, which was the driving force behind it. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to give some explanation of why the Quota Act should have provided the stimulus to vertical integration in the industry. Rather than rewrite my own words, in this connection I take the liberty of quoting what I wrote elsewhere a year or two ago:

"Any large-scale vertical integration in the British industry could only have come about prior to 1927 by an alliance between British and American interests. There was no British producing company with a sufficiently large and stable output to constitute the production end of an integrated group. It would, of course, have been theoretically possible to form a large circuit as the guaranteed market for a large production programme, but in practice the production programme would have been an American one. The reason for this lies in the large number of films which any cinema or

circuit requires during the year. No vertically-integrated group in either the American or British film industries can by itself economically produce enough films to fill all its programme requirements. Hence the new circuit would have continued to depend for a considerable part of its programme on American films, and the American companies would have been in a most powerful position to protect their own interests, even to the extent of virtually banning British films."

The renters' quota reversed this situation. Nevertheless it was not all plain sailing for the producers.

It must be remembered that during the first year of the new Act the talkies were almost unknown in this country. As I mentioned in my last article, only about a dozen of them had arrived before the end of 1928, and for most of the succeeding year their disciplines had not yet been determined. The effect of this indecision can be partially seen in the figures of British long films registered. Under the stimulus of the Quota, British producers made 128 films in the year ending March 31st, 1929; in the succeeding year, however, the number dropped to 96. Thereafter the future of the talkies was assured, and production rose again to 122 films in 1930-31 and continued to increase until the peak of 228 films registered in 1937-38.

The years 1928 and 1929 were bitter-sweet for British producers. Here they were for the first time in their parlous history with an assured market. And yet no sooner had they reached Elysium than the coming of sound had robbed them of its joys. The new studios which were being built were out of date before they were completed, and production costs were suddenly inflated by the need for new equipment. The setback was only temporary, though, and before long British studios had followed the lead of Hollywood.

The number of films made is, however, by no means the whole story. It was not long before a new term crept into the jargon of the film world and the "quota quickie" became the bane of British production. Although it is undoubtedly true that many of these trashy films were made by producers simply to cash-in on the guaranteed market offered by the quota, there were others which were

started with the best entertainment motives and which ended in the "quickie" class only through circumstances beyond the producers' control. These circumstances were, in the main, the peculiar method of financing films which arose at this time.

Let us forget for the moment the large combines which were able to finance production out of their working capital and consider the small independent producer, whose working capital was only a two-figure bank account and an idea. His first requirement was to contact a distributor who needed a British film to fulfil his quota obligations. In nine cases out of ten this would be an American company, since most British renters had their own associated production companies and until 1932, at any rate, the major American renters had not set up production units in this country. As the main purpose of the American renter was to sell the products of his own studio in Hollywood, he had no desire to impair the values of those products by "sponsoring" expensive British films. Nor was there any need to do so. The renters' quota simply obliged him to see that a certain percentage of the length of film he acquired for trading was of British make. There was no need for him even to sell the British films, and indeed an official committee enquiring in 1936 into the working of the Quota Act reported that: "*It was admitted by the [foreign-controlled] renters in evidence before us that the majority of the films made for them to enable them to satisfy their quota obligations are worthless and remain in their offices largely unsold and unused.*"

In this situation, it is scarcely surprising that the producer found himself discussing his proposed film with a man who had no concern whatever with its content or treatment—all that mattered was its length. Even to suggest that there was any discussion is an exaggeration; for "quota" terms quickly became stereotyped, and the producer found that his "release contract" provided that when he delivered 4,000 feet of negative he would receive so much per foot—normally about £1.

(Continued on page 222)

Left, "*The Indiscretions of Eve*," a "comedy extravaganza" of 1932. A contemporary reviewer claimed that "clever camera-work helps to obscure the very slight story." Right, "*The Maid of the Mountains*" (1932): Lupino Lane directed this B.I.P. production, based on the old musical comedy.





Three Actresses

Judy Garland

Judy Garland (seen here with Tommy Noonan) returns to the screen after four years, in a musical version of "A Star is Born."

Audrey Hepburn's second Hollywood film is "Sabrina Fair" (directed by Billy Wilder), a romantic comedy adapted from a play by Samuel Taylor. Miss Hepburn plays a chauffeur's daughter loved by two wealthy brothers—a part taken on the New York stage by Margaret Sullivan.



Audrey Hepburn

**Shirley
Booth**



Shirley Booth in a scene from "About Mrs. Leslie," directed by Daniel Mann. Her appearance here, as a night-club singer, reminds one that she scored one of her most notable Broadway successes in the musical version of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn."



Madame de . . . and the Ambassador (Danielle Darrieux and Vittorio de Sica) ; Ophuls' "... visual frou-frou".

Film Reviews

MADAME DE . . .

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

Two or three years ago, at a programme organised by the London Film Club in honour of Max Ophuls, James Mason introduced the director to his admirers with a little poem. I forget exactly how this went, but I am sure of one thing: "Max" rhymed with "tracks". The appositeness of the joke was obvious even then, from the films Ophuls had made in Hollywood which, culminating in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, had won him the unquestioned status of *petit maître*. Even less successful pictures like *Caught* and *The Reckless Moment* had a finesse and a style unique in the American cinema of that (or this) time. In all these films, Ophuls' virtuosity with the travelling camera was obvious to the trained eye; but it was a legitimate virtuosity, not merely pleasing in its skill, but expressive, too, of this artist's characteristic, nimble shrewdness. As his camera swooped and glided round sets and actors, so Ophuls himself skimmed over the landscape of his stories, uncommitted, unconcerned with profundities, but clear-sighted, sharp to analyse and observe.

Perhaps it was unfortunate that he had to return to Europe with a subject that put so high a premium on virtuosity. In Ophuls' *La Ronde*, decoration and wit triumphed over the harsher cynicism of Schnitzler; but the camera moved more brilliantly than ever and—apart from the errors in casting which weakened its second half—the film seemed a wonderfully successful *tour-de-force*. The same good fortune, however, did not attend *Le Plaisir*; Maupassant proved less easy to take over than Schnitzler, and for the first time one felt a sense of strain, of style exaggerating itself into mannerism. Like the little girl in Grimm's story who put her feet into the magic shoes (except that in this case the damage must have been done one day when he eased himself on to the boom of a crane in some marvellously equipped Hollywood studio), Max Ophuls could not stop travelling.

These remarks may seem an oblique approach to *Madame*

de . . .: but here, more than ever, the style of the film is its essence. Take the start: a long wardrobe, full of expensive clothes—a woman's hand passes tentatively down the row, inspecting, rejecting, finally selecting. This is Madame de . . ., preparing to visit her jeweller. She picks out a pair of earrings, sits down at her dressing table, puts them on, admires herself in the mirror. She leaves the room. All this quite intricate action is caught, with breathtaking precision, in a single, continuous shot. And so onward: the camera is never still; every shot has the tension of a conjuring trick. The sleight of hand is dazzling, but fatally distracting.

Louise de Vilmorin's book has perhaps been over-praised. ("Madame de . . . must be taken very seriously indeed, as seriously as a flawless lyric, or an epigram from the Greek Anthology"—Vita Sackville West in *The Observer*). It is a long short story, the ironic history of a romance that starts as sophisticated intrigue, and ends as tragedy. The beautiful Madame de . . . sells her diamond ear-rings to pay some debts that she has incurred without her husband's knowledge; the jeweller informs Monsieur de . . ., who buys the ear-rings back and presents them to his departing mistress. The jewels are again sold, to a foreign diplomat who is posted to Paris as Ambassador, falls in love with Madame de . . . and gives her the ear-rings as a token. This neat figure is only the prelude to the essential conflict of the story: Madame de . . . accepts the Ambassador's gift without revealing the truth. When he discovers her duplicity, the blow to his pride is so great that he breaks off their relationship—to the despair of Madame de . . ., who now finds that what she had started as a diverting flirtation has taken a ferocious hold on her heart. And the ear-rings, which have become the symbol of her pride, without which she cannot live, are removed by Monsieur de The denouement is fatal.

If this bitter little fable lacks quite the passion and penetration claimed for it by Miss Sackville West, it is nevertheless a most satisfying piece of work, exquisitely constructed and balanced, dignified by a classical austerity of style. So bare is its narrative, in fact, and so uncompromising its exclusion of the picturesque and the emotional, that it would seem im-

possible to adapt for the cinema without either gratuitous expansion, or the substitution of an altogether more detailed and seductive style. Ophüls has chosen the latter solution. With a supple, ingenious, glittering flow of images that is aesthetically the diametrical opposite of Mme de Vilmorin's chaste prose, he has made the story an excuse for a succession of rich decorative displays. Christian Matras' lighting has his usual sophisticated gloss, and the settings by d'Eaubonne exploit to the full the habitual charms of period decor. In all this visual *frou-frou*, it is not surprising that the characters become lost, and the interior development of their drama (discrete enough in the original) is almost completely unobserved. This is the more regrettable, since the actors (Danielle Darrieux as Madame de . . . , Charles Boyer as the husband, and Vittorio de Sica as the Ambassador) present their exteriors remarkably well. Without exploration of these relationships, however, and a more serious irony, the story is reduced to a series of adroit, finally rather tedious manœuvres round the persistent ear-rings. I, for one, have to admit a sharply sympathetic response to the remark with which Madame de . . . greets the jeweller, returning to re-sell him the ear-rings for the fourth or fifth time: "*Fichez-moi le camp (or something equivalent) avec ces boucleurs d'oreille!*"

One is accustomed to commiserating with European directors who have gone astray in Hollywood. The uneasy progress of Ophüls since his return to Europe is less easy to explain. Perhaps the success of *La Ronde* was too heady. Certainly both *The Reckless Moment* and *Letter From an Unknown Woman* are better films than *Le Plaisir* or *Madame de . . .*. A less sophisticated climate might perhaps help: what a pity he is not, after all, coming to make a film in England.

LE SALAIRE DE LA PEUR

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

Le Salaire de la Peur comes to London with a Grand Prix from Cannes and an immense reputation. It turns out to be at once more and less impressive than one had expected. As a thriller it is violent, exciting and, on the whole, excellently sustained; as a serious dramatic work expressing a significant *Weltanschauung*—its reputation and heavily grandiloquent style demand that one look at it in this light—it is inconsistent and trite. It might be described as a scorcher with pretensions.

The film opens with a close-shot of two beetles locked in combat; the camera tilts up to show that they are on strings being manipulated by a small boy. This image sets the key

to the atmosphere of the setting—a small mushroom town in Central America, sprung up around an American-run oilfield. Its inhabitants are out-of-work adventurers, lazy, tough, disillusioned, wanting only to get away. A fire in an oilfield several hundred miles away offers a chance of escape. A load of nitro-glycerine is to be taken by lorry to the burning well—a dangerous mission, since the slightest jolt will send the whole load into the air. The bait is \$2,000, and four of the desperadoes get the job: Jo, a tough, weary, middle-aged gangster; Mario, Jo's mate in the first lorry, an amiable drifter who idolises Jo; Luigi, a jolly Italian bricklayer; and Bimba, Luigi's companion, a mysterious German refugee. The two lorries meet terrible obstacles—the drive takes up some three-quarters of the film—and three of the drivers die. Luigi's and Bimba's lorry blows up; and Jo, who has lost his nerve under the strain, is wounded in a violent accident caused by Mario and dies before the lorry reaches its destination. Mario, the only survivor, sets out to return to the small town with his reward and, in his joy, recklessly crashes over a precipice. The lorry's siren, released by the crash, screams with a piercing note over the end title.

The story of *Le Salaire de la Peur* offers great possibilities for physical excitement, and Clouzot exploits them for all that they are worth. With his flair for violent action and his eye for the most lurid detail any situation has to offer, he has produced a remarkably sustained adventure film. Yet though one is gripped for most of its length—there are two scenes which stretch one's credulity too far—the excitement is somehow impersonal, like that of watching a trapezist in a circus. The characters, unlikeable and superficially portrayed, excite no sympathy. *Le Salaire de la Peur*, with its heavy, over-charged style, its ponderous rhythm and hysterically composed images, tries to inflate its subject into something larger than a thriller. But what? Clouzot is fascinated by evil and takes pains to show it at its most sensational: a character amuses himself by throwing stones at a chained dog; Mario waves cheerfully to his girl as she disappears into her employer's bedroom; and so on. The director isolates the ugliest details of his situation—we get close shots of Jo's putrefying leg, of his oil-drenched face, long close-ups of agonised faces—and passes on to the next. Yet with all this he makes no real statement about his characters: nowhere does he commit himself to any sympathy (much less compassion) which might have given point to the stress he lays on physical and mental anguish. The portraits of the four riders are brushed in with crude, gaudy strokes: Bimba shaves half-way through the journey because he wants to go to his death looking his best;



"Le Salaire de la Peur": Charles Vanel and Yves Montand.

Mario hurls a rock at Jo's head "to save time," saying that he could have beaten him in a fair fight but it would have taken longer. All four change their characters during the voyage—the swaggering Jo succumbs to panic; the other three, established as weak, gain strength—but they do so without explanation. They do not develop: the first impression of depth turns out really to be a lack of focus.

Le Salaire de la Peur is realised with the technical virtuosity one expects from its director. Armand Thirard's photography is hard and brilliant, Auric's score economically used and powerful. Charles Vanel, Folco Lulli and Peter van Eyck give admirably tight performances, and there is a terrifying portrait of a flabby bully from Jo Dest. Only Yves Montand (Mario), with his single tight-lipped grimace denoting toughness, and his tendency to fall into casually elegant stances, lets down the standard of performance.

On its appearance in Cannes, *Le Salaire de la Peur* was described by some critics as a communist propaganda film disguising under its adventure story an attack on American capitalism. The comment is misleading. The film is admittedly anti-American, but it would be unfair to single this out for special mention, for *Le Salaire de la Peur* is unselectively and impartially anti-everything.

CINEMASCOPE PRODUCTIONS

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

It was not, presumably, accidental that the second CinemaScope feature should be a comedy on a relatively modest scale. 20th Century Fox, one imagines, intended to provide an immediate answer to the inevitable criticism that, whatever advantages CinemaScope might have in enlarging films already spectacular, it would scarcely work for stories in which most of the emphasis was on dialogue and playing. But, if that was the point, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (director, Jean Negulesco) demonstrably fails to prove it. The story, about three millionaire-hunting models who wait for the tycoons to walk into their carefully baited Park Avenue trap, has the makings of a moderately entertaining comedy in the brash, cheerful, wise-cracking style; Nunnally Johnson's script—adapted, somewhat oddly, from two different plays—adequately achieves the customary blend of surface cynicism and underlying sentimentality; some of the dialogue amuses. Of the players, Marilyn Monroe (a short-sighted blonde who would rather run into the furniture than wear spectacles) and Betty Grable (who seems to rely mainly on a bright, eager-to-please smile) contribute little more than their presence; but Lauren Bacall, the most ruthless and most elegant of the trio, and William Powell, as a genial, middle-aged millionaire, play with stylish and good-humoured assurance.

This type of comedy should be fast, sharp-edged, smoothly paced. In CinemaScope, the effect becomes that of intimate revue played at Drury Lane. Dialogue, booming hollowly from the loudspeakers to left and right of the screen, falls flat; the players prowl aimlessly around rooms the size of tennis courts; subtlety of effect can scarcely be attempted; and a close-up of an aeroplane propeller seems easier to manage than one of the human face. To "use" the screen, there are shots of an aeroplane taking off, snow covered mountains, the New York skyline and waterfront, bringing to the picture an incongruous air of travelogue. Characteristic of the enterprise is the lengthy, irrelevant pre-credits sequence in which the studio's symphony orchestra gratuitously demonstrates stereophonic sound. The film suggests that, given enough determination, this sort of story *can* be made in CinemaScope; it also forcibly indicates that it is hardly worth the trouble.

How to Marry a Millionaire, however, seems invigorating in comparison with *King of the Khyber Rifles* (CinemaScope's titles, after the curt *The Robe*, seem designed for the elongated screen). Here the mountains of Arizona, or possibly Oklahoma, do duty for the North West Frontier territory, and against them a banal story about a half-caste officer, despised by his colleagues but loved by the general's daughter, is laboriously played out. One might have expected the film to concentrate on spectacular action sequences; but the fights, when they come, are half-hearted little skirmishes. Instead, Tyrone Power and Terry Moore contend with dialogue so archaic in tone that it appears more suited to silence and captions. Henry King's direction is stolidly unadventurous—to compare the film with, say, the not very distinguished pre-war *Gunga Din* is to realise

how much Hollywood has lost the knack of bringing enthusiasm and conviction to the straightforward action picture. As far as CinemaScope's potentialities are concerned, *King of the Khyber Rifles* provides no further evidence, though it suggests that the big screen makes for a peculiarly oppressive variety of boredom. It also demonstrates that the typical fight of the future may be not a vertical slugging-match but a horizontal affair, with the combatants, elongated to alarming proportions, crawling painfully from side to side of the screen.

HOBSON'S CHOICE

Reviewed by Philip Hope-Wallace

Harold Brighouse's Lancashire comedy was always much more than a piece of Eh, bah goom. It is a real comedy of character, this tale of how the determined Maggie worsted Hobson the bootmaker by marrying the best workman in her dad's shop and putting dad out of business. Maggie is a most rewarding part for any actress; it is almost impossible to go far wrong with it. Willie Mossop, the bashful workman on whom greatness is thrust, has wonderful chances too. And the heavy father, who should be a perfect counterpart to his daughter's hard-headed good sense, provides a fine character "outing." The play, as anyone who has seen it often in repertory will testify, is nearly indestructible. But what has been added here nearly all detracts rather than enhances.

David Lean's production has a high finish and style. The ladies of Salford never, I think, wore quite such swanky bustles, but the look of the wet paving stones and chimneys and much in the decorations is highly authentic. There is rhythm which almost, but not quite, disguises the play's three clear and carefully-prepared-for curtains; the camera is really made to comment. There are visual jokes. It is very good. All that Lean fails to get is the acting performances he should have been able to extract from such players. Some, but not all, have difficulties with the Lancashire accent, notably the two younger daughters. John Mills is an unsubtle actor at the best of times, but he doesn't fail to scoop the biggest plums out of the part of Mossop; and Brenda de Banzie, who does very well indeed as Maggie up to the bed-going scene at the end of the play's second act—it is all fatuous smiling thereafter—plays up to Mills with a restraint and a tenderness which strike one as being perfectly consistent and entirely plausible. A nice performance by a good stage actress. But the balance is thrown out by Charles Laughton as Hobson, who ought to be a dead-true comedy study of a Mancunian, steam-rolling away about money and the proper subordination of daughters, but whom Mr. Laughton plays for a rollicking, babyish, farcical fatty, all belch and D.T.s. This, on its own, would be a superb vaudeville turn—as witness the long, silent drunk scene with comic music by Malcolm Arnold which would have us rolling in the aisles of any music-hall in the world. And he, at least, has a good Northern accent, though Yorkshire rather than Lancashire. But the performance is gargantuan and though it is crammed with wonderful "actor's touches" it very seldom quite rings true or even makes a real foil for Maggie's high-handedness. We seem to be seeing exchanges between Marlene Dietrich and Emil Jennings, rather than between Brighouse's perfectly noted Lancashire father and daughter. But, for all its patchiness as a work of art, the long-drawn film draws from the play enough natural warmth to keep all but the most critical audience aglow.

THE GOLDEN COACH

Reviewed by Tony Richardson

A film with as many defects as *The Golden Coach* needs some extraordinary compensation. Its construction is lop-sided; its narrative confused; its presentation is careless and often undramatic; its dialogue is frequently banal; and the acting in it ranges, with one exception, from the inadequate to the atrocious. Its compensation is not that it is utterly personal but that the creative personality revealed by the film, for all its flaws, is so utterly charming.

The film is based on Prosper Merimee's one-act play *La Carrosse de Saint Sacrement*. This is a clever, tight little *pièce de situation* of how an actress pulled a fast one on her Viceroy lover. Renoir has turned it inside out and made of it a rambling, enchanted fable of how, in seventeenth century Lima,

"The Maggie": the business man (Paul Douglas) leads his stubborn crew back to their ship.



the Viceroy falls in love with the leading lady of the troupe of Italian comedians and how, to seal his love, he gives her, despite the opposition of his court, his golden coach. A fairy tale, yes, but the most genuinely sophisticated of fairy tales. The whole existence of the world we are asked to suppose is precarious. It is measured and elegant—a Vivaldi concerto gives the film, as William Whitebait said, something of the formal quality of a masque—nevertheless, in it, passions are aroused and people suffer. The cloud-capped towers may dissolve at any time. "Where does the theatre end and life begin?" is the question behind the whole film. It is characteristic, too, of Renoir, that when, as here, and even more frequently in *The River*, he reduces an idea to which he has responded with all the richness of his sensibility to a line of dialogue, it sounds at once portentous and trite.

If this wider, almost visionary, reference is the very fabric of the film, it is not allowed to obscure our delight in the texture of the fabric itself. Visually the film (photographed by Claude Renoir) is breath-taking. Its beauty lies, unusually, in colour rather than the compositional values. Renoir uses simple light settings, the interiors of pale natural woods, the exteriors of mellowed plaster, and the costumes are in subdued violets, lemons, and blues. Against these are set the bright scarlets, the sharp cobalts of the players. In every shot there is some note off key—the decoration on a chair, the jewel on a cravat—that gives the whole harmony an added strength and vibrancy. One sequence above all is miraculous. The comedians have to convert the courtyard of the inn into a theatre. Masks are shaped and tried on, backcloths unrolled, costumes improvised, props given a touch of paint, songs and tumbling rehearsed. It is an old man's vision smoothing away all difficulties of the wonder of artistic creation itself.

Renoir's hand is nowhere more evident than in the performance of Anna Magnani as Camilla, the star of the troupe. In itself the performance is a *tour-de-force*. Magnani has to sing and dance and mime *à la* Commedia dell'Arte and to play in English. Yet how different the result from the prodigious virtuoso display Visconti elicited from her in *Bellissima*. Renoir has gone straight to the woman, not the actress. (Practically every other performance is a disastrous witness of how such a method can go astray when the performers are not first class actors as well.) By doing that he makes us see, perhaps more clearly than in any other of her performances, except for moments in *Vulcano*, the essence of her personality. The genius of other great actresses is that they are extra-

ordinary, special, unique; Magnani's that she is earthy, common, every day. She is "the woman of the people". Her distinction lies only in that she has lived, toiled, suffered more deeply than others. Her experience has toughened, even coarsened her, but it has made her warmth and humour the stronger. And out of it is born a dignity which is without illusions and pretensions. Quarrelling, begging, managing, yielding, laughing at the manners of society and her own clumsiness in trying to ape them, or letting her dress slip a little further off her shoulders as she learns that the Viceroy's generosity extends to giving her the golden coach itself, she dominates the film. Not surprisingly, for there is between the actress and the director the bond of a humanity that is broad and deep.

THE MAGGIE

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

The Maggie, like Alexander Mackendrick's first film, *Whisky Galore!*, is set in the islands of Western Scotland and celebrates the canniness and the exuberance of the islanders. The *Maggie* is a small puffer boat manned by a devoted crew of four—Captain MacTaggart, the mate, the engineman and the Wee Boy. When she puts into port in need of repairs for which there are no funds, it looks as if she may have made her last voyage, until her crew manages to bamboozle its way into a profitable contract. Calvin B. Marshall, an American business executive in England, wants a private cargo moved from Glasgow to one of the Western islands, and the *Maggie* is at sea with her load before Marshall realises that he has been tricked. What follows is, in effect, a chase in which Marshall tries to catch up with her in order to transfer his cargo to a more respectable vessel. Through a series of escapades, the quiet, methodical cunning of the crew is matched against all the resources Marshall can muster—innumerable long-distance telephone calls, taxis, aeroplanes, and an assistant who is to sail with the cargo (and of whom the crew soon disposes by getting him arrested on a charge of poaching). Throughout, MacTaggart manages to remain one jump ahead. Though exasperated by the captain's lies and the dilatoriness of the crew, Marshall finally surrenders to the charm and character of the old puffer; when the *Maggie* runs on to the rocks, he decides to jettison his cargo to save her and, as a last gesture, pays his fee for the hopelessly bungled job so that the *Maggie* may be repaired.

The Maggie, a picaresque little adventure comedy, derives

most of its humour from the character of the islanders. The script, like William Rose's earlier one for *Genevieve*, is rich in incident: the obstacles which MacTaggart contrives to prevent the American from removing his cargo become more and more ingenious, and, in spite of the extravagance of some of the escapades, progress with a sort of relentless logic. Only towards the end does the story run out of predicaments and switch to a not altogether successful passage of pathos. The director's observation of the islanders, affectionate, ironic, and quite free from patronage, brings them to life with a fresh and sometimes touching humour. They are never allowed to go out of character for the sake of a joke—as they sometimes did in *Whisky Galore!*—and the fun is all the more acceptable for it. The portrait of the American is less successful; the idea of the busy city man finding release in the example of the simple fisher-folk is treated half-heartedly, as though the director were a little shy of it. Paul Douglas plays the American with his gruff, teddy-bear charm, but it is a rather blurred performance which does not develop. The sub-plot concerning his strained relations with his wife is, in any case, weakly sketched in and uncertainly established.

The direction is for the most part pleasantly discursive, yet retains a quick and flexible pace. Alex Mackenzie plays MacTaggart with unobtrusive skill, and Mackendrick has obtained a beautifully tough and sensitive performance from the boy, Tommy Kearins. One among a number of good minor performances is immediately striking: Fiona Clyne plays her single, rather awkwardly written scene with sincerity and just the right suggestion of latent temperament.

THE DRAWINGS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI

Reviewed by Patricia Hutchins

Film-makers in Britain have, in general, been slow to tackle the problems of art films, and *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci* is one of the first major productions to be undertaken here.

At least three other films have been made about Leonardo. The most ambitious was that produced by Luciano Emmer and Arcady in France—a trilogy, of which the admirable central part, with its subtly masked images, giving the effect of organic growth to the anatomical studies, was flanked by sequences which attempted to illustrate the topographical and personal aspects of Leonardo's life. The result—an effect of

important work confused by over-emphasis—was somewhat frustrating. *The Tragic Pursuit of Perfection*, directed by Enrico Fulchignoni and based on Antonina Vallentin's biography, was more satisfying, if less historically sound. The attempt here was to illustrate aspects of Leonardo's personality through his work, and the presentation of the self-portraits—themselves not authenticated, however—was particularly effective.

The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci is more direct in its approach. Its material is the Windsor collection of drawings, and, produced by Basil Wright and directed by Adrian de Potier, it was made in connection with the exhibition held at Burlington House to mark the quincentenary of Leonardo's birth. It illustrates Leonardo's interest in all natural forms—of plants, animals or men—and his preoccupation with the correspondence and opposition of different structures and their functions. Michael Ayrton's script presents the dual aspects of conflict and tranquillity which appear in his work, and manages to avoid both an over-reverential tone and the "enigma" theme which has too often been the refuge of journalists before the many and not always co-ordinated abilities of Leonardo. The material has been intelligently selected; lighting and camera movement are skilfully effective without ever falling into conscious "cleverness"; the Technicolor generally succeeds in capturing the tones and colours of the different media employed by Leonardo. The early sequences are a little uncertain in pace, but the film soon settles down to a quiet and confident measure, lingering over each work to allow it to be properly seen.

Alan Rawsthorne's musical score makes a good entry, and maintains a positive contribution to the pictures seen on the screen. The commentary (spoken by Sir Laurence Olivier, with Cecil Day Lewis intervening in the quotations from Leonardo's own writings) is clear, unpretentious, and keeps a sense of scale—so often forgotten in art films. The concluding statements, though, might well have been anticipated a little: as in a radio script, the listener must be prepared for a complex idea, since there is no possibility of re-reading or reflection.

The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci has obvious value for Leonardo's admirers, and the less informed are likely to find it pleasurable and stimulating; the film is also interesting as showing the possibility of the forthright tradition of British documentary entering on a new phase—the documentary of aesthetics and ideas.

IN BRIEF

Directed by George Cukor, scripted by Garson Kanin and starring Judy Holliday, **IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU** (Columbia) is a comedy with good credentials; and it provides, up to a point, the expected civilised, pleasant-tempered entertainment. The situation is bright and engaging: a girl determined to make herself known to the world conceives the idea of renting a vast billboard and plastering her undistinguished name across it; she trades her billboard to a soap-king for six more advertising signs; she wanders about New York in a triumphant daze admiring the varying merits of her signs; she is taken up by television. After this, nothing much can happen except her realisation that marriage to a solid, reliable documentary film-maker (a new profession for such heroes) is preferable to publicity. The targets for satire—television, ballyhoo, the mania for meaningless publicity—are easy ones, and the film develops too good-humouredly to hit them very hard. A director such as Sturges might have made it tougher, faster and funnier; Cukor seems rather too sympathetic towards his obsessed heroine—a freak, after all, as the exasperated film-maker tells her—and, after an attractive opening sequence in Central Park, he lets the tempo fall off. Subsequent scenes, though brightly written and played by Judy Holliday and a likeable newcomer, Jack Lemmon, fail quite to sustain the joke, and Peter Lawford's performance as the soap magnate appears too heavy for the material. Judy Holliday, as usual, makes the abysmally silly heroine at once funny and endearing; she has demonstrated that she can play variations on a single part supremely well and, enjoyable though this part is, it might be interesting to see her try something new.—James Morgan.

"It Should Happen to You": Judy Holliday and Jack Lemmon meet in Central Park.



STRICTLY FOR EGGHEADS

Thoughts on Running a Specialised Hall

SCANDALOUS! said the critics—scandalous that *Death of a Salesman* should be denied a circuit release; that *A Walk in the Sun* should go the rounds, mutilated, as a second feature; that the advertising of “M-G-M’s *Julius Caesar*” should carry not a single credit for its author. More scandalous still that the circuits should boost inferior films, while many of SIGHT AND SOUND’s starred choices must be sought out in the more obscure and far-flung of England’s four thousand cinemas. But it isn’t really surprising, as I have found in trying to run a specialised hall. The “discriminating” public is not nearly so large as SIGHT AND SOUND’s readers may think, and the circuits naturally prefer to work for profit rather than for art.

The Rex Cinema in Cambridge is an eleven-hundred seater on the fringe of the city. It stands in a *cul-de-sac* off a side street off another side street off the main road, and is on top of a steep hill. Despite these handicaps, it flourished until 1936 or so, when it was outclassed and outbooked by new and glossier circuit supers. Two years ago, one would have imagined that nothing could save this pathetic white elephant: Cambridge is too small for a second-run cinema to prosper in this age of fireside entertainment, and what first runs came the way of the Rex were unprepossessing rejects from the minor companies.

When the Rex changed hands in 1951, it had been undernourished for years on a diet of Codes of the West, Trails of the Yukon, Riders of the Purple Sage, and Old Mother Riley. But Cambridge has a University, and it seemed to the Rex’s new owner that there might be room for a revival cinema on the lines of the London Classics. Given the job, I drafted the first eight-week programme to suit a Michaelmas Term. Partial success came our way almost at once: full houses did happen about once a fortnight, and there were always enough gowned customers who wanted to see *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, *A Yank at Oxford*, and anything with the Marx Brothers or Bob Hope in it. It was a season of safe comedy bets. Then, to attract town as well as gown, we built up some gargantuan double-features: *Macbeth* and *Oliver Twist*, *Citizen Kane* and *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Rope* and *My Darling Clementine*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Nothing Sacred*. They succeeded, and we grew bolder. We tried first runs of such uncommercial works as *The Men*, *The World and His Wife*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Death of a Salesman*. They failed: our audiences (made up largely of undergraduates) seemed only interested in films with an established reputation, and doubtful runners did not persuade them to make the trek. Nor did some of the older classics whose virtues were lost in oblivion: *To Be Or Not To Be*, *The Talk of the Town*, *The Bowery*, *Lost Horizon*. Even *Mr. Deeds* awakened no enthusiasm when we played it; yet a year later, when our judgment was coming to be accepted, we played *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *You Can’t Take It With You* to excellent business.

Our list of record-breakers during the last two years reveals a fairly high standard, though most of the films included are either notorious, “easy to take,” or cultural “musts”: *Horse Feathers*, *Duck Soup*, *On the Town*, *Adam’s Rib*, *Destry Rides Again*, *French Without Tears*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *I Married a Witch*, *The Blue Angel*, *Fantasia*, *Quartet*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Citizen Kane*, *Road to Morocco*, *Henry V*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Extase*, *Caroline Cherie*, *Pygmalion*, *Les Belles de Nuit*, *Le Plaisir*, *Fancy Pants*. The list of failures is equally instructive, if often inexplicable: *The Men*, *It Happened One Night*, *Intruder in the Dust*, *Theodora Goes Wild*, *Talk of the Town*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The World and His Wife*, *The Pirate*, *A Foreign Affair*, *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, *A Letter to Three Wives*, *The Happy Time*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Hamlet*, *The Marrying Kind*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Desire*, *The Battle of Stalingrad*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Les Visiteurs du Soir*, *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes*. Our audiences, it seems, do not want to think.

Our out-of-term booking policy is still undergoing experiment. A year ago it seemed that we must revert to Technicolor Westerns, but, as we gradually consolidated our specialised reputation, we felt that it should extend to twelve months of the year without an undue strain on the finances. We slipped in *L’Ingenue Libertine*, *Three Forbidden Stories*, *Behind Closed Shutters*. They were liked. People came from far afield to see them. But that section of regular local customers, which had made the difference between profit and loss, began to desert us. They would tolerate dubbed foreign films, but could not get on with those which had “writing on the bottom.” And it became obvious that even our new-found, enthusiastic public responded more readily to “X” certificates than to anything else: they ignored *Plus de Vacances*, *Anna*, *Le Roi*, *Au Royaume des Cieux*, *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes*.

We are persevering in the hope of making sub-titled films popular with the “masses,” but it is not easy. That is why much continental film advertising has become so garish. Most distributors are as eager as the critics that their films should be properly received by intelligent audiences, but they are business men as well as connoisseurs . . . and so *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes* becomes *Isle of Sinners*, and *Altri Tempi* suffers a sea-change into *Infidelity*. It is significant that the only continental films to have achieved anything like a circuit release are *La Ronde*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Three Forbidden Stories*.

It is worth mentioning that the major renters are not at all helpful to specialised exhibitors. Many patrons ask us for old films without realising the difficulties. Rights may have expired; copies may be in ribbons; and, above all, the renter may find it too much trouble to take an odd booking on an old film unless we also help him with some bookings on new ones. Films are soon forgotten by the people who sell them. Pre-war classics

have generally been written off the records, and there is no way of reviving the renter's interest if he has newer films to sell, for it is the producers of the latter who are badgering him for quick returns, while the owner of the classic has probably forgotten its existence. Moreover, few renters seem to have much idea of what constitutes a specialised film. I have been refused *The Lady from Shanghai* but offered *Salome* in its stead ("Well, it's Rita Hayworth, isn't it?"), refused *Everybody's Cheering* but offered *Pagan Love Song*, refused *All About Eve* but offered *The Star*. An industry whose watchwords are Progress! and To Hell With TV! has little patience with nostalgia.

Nor is it true that old films are always cheap. Among the renters are some who, if they know that I desperately want a twenty-year-old film, will both raise the price as high as they can, and also make a condition of sale by which to get the film I want I must take several other cans of third-rate material on which they cannot get bookings.

Even in term, many worth-while films can find practically no audience. Thus I have regretfully relegated to the lower half of the bill the following: *Les Enfants Terribles*, which Mr. Billings cruelly but with some accuracy labelled "strictly for eggheads and longhairs"; *The Little Foxes*, Bette Davis no longer being box-office

even among intellectuals; *Alexander Nevsky*, considered by most of our audiences to be even funnier than Abbott and Costello; and *The Stars Look Down*, social conscience having apparently gone out with the 'thirties. There are others I hardly dare book: Pare Lorenz's superb *The River* has already been booed off a Cambridge screen. Would *Louisiana Story* share its fate? *L'Atalante* certainly would. *The Magnificent Ambersons* was simply ignored when the Film Society showed it, although *Citizen Kane* packed a previous meeting even after our run. *Letter from an Unknown Woman* would be put down as woman's magazine stuff. Even Ford is not a cast-iron draw; I'm sorry, Mr. Anderson, but in Cambridge they laughed at *They Were Expendable*, and not sympathetically. Perhaps Harold Lloyd or W. C. Fields could in time be made as fashionable as the Marx Brothers, but not enough of their films are available to start a cult.

Running a specialised hall would be easier if every exhibitor had the facilities of the National Film Theatre to obtain the early Hitchcocks, the Garbos, the Keatons and so on. But such delectable morsels are too often not available, and we commercial exhibitors must rummage for scraps. Our main hope is that CinemaScope will cause such a famine of "flat" films that we can gorge ourselves on the inevitably resulting feast of reissues.

LESLIE HALLIWELL.

ANSWERS TO A FILM QUIZ

The Quiz in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND wasn't intended to be particularly easy, but the relatively few readers who entered for it mostly displayed formidable memories or an assiduous use of the reference books; only the trickier questions, such as the identification of lines of dialogue, publicity slogans or the extracts from critics' writings, fairly consistently caught competitors out.

The final result is almost a clean sweep for Scandinavia: the first prize of a two-guinea book token goes to Mr. Einar Lauritzen of Stockholm, who scored 97 points out of a possible 115, and the second prize (a guinea book token) to the joint entry from Denmark of Mr. Erik Ulrichsen and Mr. Jørgen Stegelmann, with 96 points. Mr. John Cutts and Mr. Charles Higham dead-heated with 92 points—each receives a guinea book token. We thank all readers who entered for the Quiz and, if they disagree with our answers to some of the more obscure questions, we can only say that to the best of our belief these are correct.

ANSWERS

- (a) *Sudden Fear*; (b) *Flamingo Road*; (c) *Humoresque*; (d) *Mademoiselle France*; (e) *This Woman is Dangerous*; (f) *Possessed*; (g) *Goodbye, My Fancy*; (h) *Rain*.
- Carmen—filmed at least nine times.
- (a) *Prix de Beauté*, directed by Augusto Genina.
(b) *Street of Sin*.
- In each case, the leading lady was the wife of the director.
- (a) Flaubert; (b) Emily Brontë; (c) George Sand; (d) Lord Byron; (e) Thackeray; (f) Elizabeth Barrett Browning; (g) Joseph Conrad.
- (a) *Clair de Lune*, by Debussy; (b) *La Violetera*, by Padilla; (c) *Espani Cani*, by Marquina; (d) Mozart Concerto (K.453) in G Major; (e) Brahms' Academic Overture; (f) *Tristan and Isolde*; (g) seven films at least: *The Common Touch*, *Song of Russia*, *The Great Lie*, *Anchors Aweigh*, *C.E.M.A.* and an American and a Russian biography of Tchaikowsky.
- (a) Ramon Novarro, in *Crisis*; (b) Mae Marsh, in *Blueprint for Murder*; (c) Francis X. Bushman, in *David and Bathsheba*; (d) Dorothy Gish, in *Richer than the Earth* (*The Whistle at Eaton Falls*).

- (a) *To Have and Have Not*; (b) *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney*; (c) *Dombey and Son*; (d) *The Petrified Forest*; (e) *The Suicide Club*; (f) *The Sacred Flame*; (g) *Ah, Wilderness*; (h) *An American Tragedy*; (i) *Berkeley Square*.
- (a) Jean Renoir; (b) Griffith, Dreyer, Billy Wilder; (c) Fritz Lang, Dovzhenko, Robert Bresson; (d) von Stroheim, John Huston; (e) Chaplin; (f) René Clair, Marcel Carné, E. A. Dupont and others; (g) Robert Flaherty; (h) Carol Reed, Laurence Olivier, William Dieterle, de Sica and others; (i) Gene Kelly; (j) André Cayatte.
- To the best of our belief, *Shattered*, made by Lupu Pick in 1921.
- (a) Robert Hamer edited *Jamaica Inn*; (b) Luis Bunuel was assistant director on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*; (c) David O. Selznick produced the Garbo *Anna Karenina*; (d) David Lean edited *Escape Me Never*; (e) Joseph L. Mankiewicz wrote the dialogue for *Our Daily Bread*; (f) John Huston wrote the dialogue for *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*; (g) Marcel Carné was assistant director on *Sous les Toits de Paris*; (h) Fred Zinnemann appeared as an extra in *All Quiet on the Western Front*; (i) E. A. Dupont directed *Forgotten Faces*; (j) Claude Autant-Lara designed the sets for *Nana*; (k) Graham Greene wrote the original story of *Went the Day Well*.
- (a) *Laughing Anne*; (b) *Ruby Gentry*; (c) *A Streetcar Named Desire*; (d) *The Man Between*; (e) *Salome*; (f) *Brief Encounter*; (g) *Moulin Rouge*; (h) *The Women*.
- (a) Elia Kazan in *City for Conquest*; (b) William Dieterle in *Waxworks*; (c) Alfred Hitchcock in *Under Capricorn*; (d) Otto Preminger in *Stalag 17*.
- (a) *Hue and Cry*; (b) *Nora Prentiss*; (c) *Intimate Relations*; (d) *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*; (e) *Mildred Pierce*; (f) *Our Very Own*; (g) *Gilda*; (h) *Shane* (and others).
- (a) Graham Greene; (b) William Whitebait; (c) C. A. Lejeune; (d) Richard Winnington; (e) Dilys Powell; (f) John Grierson.
- (a) Clara Bow; (b) Ann Sheridan; (c) Lauren Bacall; (d) Frank Sinatra; (e) Erich von Stroheim; (f) Stahr, a character in a novel of the same name by Scott Fitzgerald; (g) Jean Harlow; (h) Ursula Thiess, or Yvonne de Carlo.

THE DECLINE OF CHARM

William K.
Everson



Neil Hamilton and Carol Dempster in Griffith's "The White Rose".

WALKING through Times Square a few months ago, I was rather unexpectedly "attacked" by a marquee advertising a film that "stops you like a slug in the chest . . . shocks you like a kick in the face" (*Vice Squad*). Immediately across the street, another cinema was playing *I, The Jury*, which threatened to "dynamite the screen" and "blast you out of your seat." In the foyer, advertising for the next presentation (*The Big Heat*) was built primarily around the "vice, dice and corruption" tag-line, and stills of boiling coffee being tossed into the heroine's face. And just a few days later, another picture (*99 River Street*) proudly announced its intention to "rip into you like a double-crossing dame," and assured its prospective audience that it was "like a kick in the teeth."

Certainly there is a place for the tough thriller in movie fare, although I remember the days not too far distant when classics like *G Men* were considered good enough to be sold on their own merits, without appealing to the filmgoer's dormant sadism. But today's films—or the advertising of them—seem to have developed an increasingly aggressive edge. While this tendency is perhaps prevalent to a certain degree all over the world, it is certainly most marked in the output of Hollywood. With all the current talk about better pictures and wide-screen "gimmicks" regaining that "lost audience," it seems that Hollywood may be guilty of overlooking one quality in its pictures which might well have saved it from this mass drifting away of audiences. That quality is charm.

The reasons for the disappearance of that elusive quality, if not logical, are at least fairly obvious. But first it is perhaps necessary to establish that charm *is* important in motion pictures. It is, I feel, no mere coincidence that it grew in stature and sensitivity as the movies grew; that when it was at its peak (1925-26) American cinema was reaching heights that it has never since regained; and that when charm gradually began draining out of the American film towards the end of the 'thirties, the general decline in quality paralleled it to a remarkable degree.

II

Initially, of course, charm was essentially the responsibility of the star. In *My Baby* (Biograph, 1912), Mary

Pickford's delightful performance as the young wife and mother (a mature role in contrast to her usual "Cinderella" chores at that time) was far more pleasing than the rather naïve sentimentality of Griffith's story and direction. Griffith, in fact, was very lucky during that period—while his later films often had a touching charm of their own, the pre-*Birth of a Nation* romances depended very heavily upon the personality of the leading lady. The charm that Lillian Gish radiated, and the sentiment that Griffith injected, harmonised well together. As yet, however, the "charm school" among leading ladies was relatively limited. It was enough that the beautiful Edna Purviance glide gracefully across a ballroom, or be photographed in as many close-ups as possible; Mary Pickford had not yet become too studied in her mannerisms, and Mabel Normand was always a delight. But Mae Marsh's flutterings tend to seem very irritating today, and Blanche Sweet dates most of all.

The 'twenties, however, produced some wonderful collaborations between stars and directors. Corinne Griffith, Lillian Gish, Edna Purviance, Norma Shearer, Dolores Costello, Florence Vidor, Betty Bronson and, of course, Garbo were all heroines who *looked* like heroines, in contrast to the hard-boiled babes and dance-hostess types who exude exaggerated and somewhat ridiculous sex in many of today's films. Working with directors like Chaplin, Griffith, Lubitsch, Monta Bell and two now almost forgotten men, Herbert Brenon and Malcolm St. Clair, they helped to create some of the most attractive and touching films ever made in Hollywood. Many of these films were regarded in their day as little more than programmers, and as such they have been relegated to an undeserved obscurity.

Straight drama was perhaps not one of the strongest points of the American cinema during the early and mid 'twenties, but nevertheless many films of that genre have a tenderness and beauty missing from their equivalent today. Griffith's *The White Rose* (1923), for all its contrived *Stella Dallas* sobs, remains a most appealing film. Even before the credits fade, one is disarmed by a foreword in which Griffith explains that there are no mob scenes or spectacular action sequences in his latest picture,



"The Strong Man": Harry Langdon.

and that "... the response you give it depends upon the love and nobility hidden in the dim halls of your heart." Throughout, Griffith's titles lend the film a somewhat dated nostalgia. Following Ivor Novello's seduction of Mae Marsh, a title explains: "Like David, the sinner of old, he heaped ashes of repentance upon his head and wrapped his heart in sackcloth." Or later: "Lighting up the room like the holy rays from an altar lamp, the terrible mystery of woman's unselfish love." In spite of oneself, in spite of knowing that Griffith was perhaps mechanically applying all the tricks in the book, one is consistently moved, not least by the over-all beauty of the photography and the meticulous tinting. This latter extended not only to the use of different colour stock for varying locations (i.e., a gentle green tint for the swamp-land sequences) but to such devices as a hand-tinted blush for Carol Dempster. Today, of course, no one would make an illegitimate baby romance quite the way Griffith made *The White Rose*. Today one must be "fearless" and "outspoken," and the net result is usually just sensationalism.

But despite the success of films like *The White Rose*, the dominant trend in the mid 'twenties was to comedy. And whatever the type of comedy, slapstick or sophisticated, the pictures had both charm and a wonderfully gentle quality. Viewing *Tramp Tramp Tramp* (1926) today, it is easy to understand why Harry Langdon was considered to be quite a serious rival to Chaplin. It is unfortunate that British audiences today know Langdon primarily through scores of talkie "B" pictures, and the rather inferior *Long Pants*, one of his lesser silent vehicles. *Tramp Tramp Tramp* is perhaps one of the finest screen comedies—flawlessly constructed, moving along at a breathless pace and building as it progresses, with each comedy sequence better than its predecessor. It would be unfair to attempt to describe these essentially visual scenes, but all are consistent in that they are backed by a

sort of blind faith in the general goodness of humanity and a complete lack of bitterness, despite some quite appalling misfortunes. Even the "villain"—and rival for the hand of Joan Crawford—is quite a decent sort of chap. He is pompous and somewhat ridiculous, so that one is delighted when Langdon frequently and unwittingly causes his little world to collapse around him; but one never has cause to dislike him.

The comedies of the 'twenties fell, roughly, into two camps. On one side were the films of Chaplin, Lloyd, Langdon and Keaton, with their contrasts of pathos and slapstick, and less important programmers along similar lines with Reginald Denny, Johnny Hines and Charles Ray. At the other end of the scale were the sophisticated drawing-room comedies and satires made by Lubitsch, Malcolm St. Clair and others. Most of these have survived the years surprisingly well, considering the often extremely thin plot material. One of St. Clair's best, *Are Parents People?* (1925), actually has sufficient story-outline for a two-reeler and no more, and yet, almost thirty years after it was made, it still sparkles. A comedy of manners in the Lubitsch tradition (yet owing nothing to Lubitsch, and without the rather cruel edge which he occasionally gave to his satire), it criticised adults in a genial sort of way, and then sent them home with an understanding pat on the back. St. Clair was an expert at building minor incidents into riotous comedy sequences, and his intelligent pacing and cutting in *Are Parents People?* makes one forget the absence of any real use of the moving camera. Another asset of the film was the presence of Betty Bronson, who, through mishandling by Paramount, avoided the top stardom she could surely have achieved. A delightful player, always assured and at ease, and looking a few years older than her actual mid-teens, Bronson was a unique product of the period. Her seemingly perpetual gaiety would attach itself to every scene in which she appeared, and yet, with the slightest alteration of a facial expression, she could change to a mood of abject and affecting pathos. Under Herbert Brenon's direction, she starred in two films for Paramount based on plays by James Barrie, which perhaps represent the zenith of the skilled application of charm to the Hollywood film.

The first, *Peter Pan* caught the spirit of Barrie's whimsy. It was light as a feather, at once moving and amusing, and (the introduction of some blatant Americanisms into the final reels excepted) almost wholly engaging. Bronson (who had been selected personally by Barrie) was superb, and Esther



"Peter Pan": Betty Bronson and Mary Brian. Brenon's film "... admirably caught the spirit of Barrie's whimsy".

Ralston (the mother), Mary Brian (Wendy) and Ernest Torrence (Hook) were all pleasingly in character. Yet even *Peter Pan* seemed a little clumsy by comparison when later the same year Brenon and Bronson made *A Kiss for Cinderella*. The bulk of the film was taken up with the dream sequence wherein the little waif sees the Cinderella story in her own cockney terms. In this sequence, when Cinderella is wafted from the palace at midnight, both Bronson and the camera were mounted on a raised, revolving and moving platform, which swept past the dancing court in one of the few shots in cinema history to achieve an authentic atmosphere of fairy-tale fantasy. The film captured a delicate and elusive mixture of whimsy, pathos and charm; and the final shot (the waif, desperately ill, looks forward happily to marrying London policeman Tom Moore), with its implication that the heroine may, in fact, die, is one of the most fragile and poignant that I have encountered in any film.

Though acclaimed as artistic successes, *Peter Pan* and *A Kiss for Cinderella* both flopped badly once they left the metropolitan first-run cinemas. Brenon remained a top-flight director, but never again made anything quite as appealing, and subsequent attempts at filming Barrie were lamentably unsuccessful. Paramount signally failed to recapture their spontaneous charm in the recent Barrie adaptations, *Darling*, *How Could You* and *Forever Female*. Let us not even mention Disney's *Peter Pan*.

As for Bronson, after a dozen or so captivating silent comedies, her stock fell when she made a disappointing talkie debut as the heroine of *The Singing Fool*. Following some minor quickies, she married in 1932 and left the screen, returning only once—in 1937, as the heroine of an Autry Western, *The Hero of Pine Ridge*. Still only 44, she now lives quietly in New Jersey.

III

The first few years of talkies saw no immediate decline in charm on the screen, despite the influence of the gangster film and the depression. Slapstick comedy, to a very large degree, lost its quality of humility. The gentle fumbblings of Langdon began to be replaced by the almost mathematical violence of Laurel and Hardy, and the casual sadism of the Marx Brothers. But the loss here was compensated for to a certain extent by the boom in musicals, many of which had a natural charm of their own. And even where charm was contrived—as it was in *Viennese Nights* (1930), one of the last big films by an underrated director, Alan Crosland—the sheer showmanship was such that one was happy to overlook it. The



"The Merry Widow": Jeannette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier in the Lubitsch version.

sophisticated comedy was still at its peak; Lubitsch was doing some of his best work; Disney was making his most delightful cartoons; Chaplin, St. Clair, La Cava and others remained active.

Even the big moral "clean-up" in late 1933 wasn't the immediate disaster that it might have been, although it was no longer possible to make a *Trouble in Paradise*. The emphasis then being placed on the "family market" resulted in the production of several groups of vehicles which at the time may have seemed to be fairly insignificant programmers. Today, however, one can look at them again with a fond nostalgia, not only because they are so typical of their period, but because they seem to contain a genuine, friendly desire to entertain. The Astaire-Rogers musicals, strangely, are none too acceptable today—their stock mannerisms, sprawling, empty and obvious plots and a curiously condescending atmosphere which somehow reaches out to the audience provoke considerable irritation. But the Shirley Temple subjects and the first gay, warm Deanna Durbin musicals stand up wonderfully well and make one wonder why most current musicals have to be so cold and aloof.

By today's standards, perhaps, the late 'thirties still seem to comprise a fairly rich period. But the wonderful era of crazy comedy (*My Man Godfrey*, *Nothing Sacred*) was over; comedy was steering a sharp, brittle course in the direction of *My Favourite Wife*, *The Philadelphia Story* and ultimately *All About Eve*. The trend to "family" entertainment was still there, but it was the beginning of the end. The Hardy Family and, a little later, Lassie, soon became assembly-line products shrewdly and inhumanly geared to a set market. And by the late 'forties, the cycle of tough Hammett-Chandler thrillers had ushered in a new era. It was fashionable now for the hero to behave like a lout, and the heroine to look and behave like a floosie, despite the one line of dialogue in reel eight which explained her motives and actions to the satisfaction of

Adolphe Menjou, Betty Bronson and Esther Ralston in a scene from Malcolm St. Clair's "Are Parents People?"



the censors. Charm—unless it be accidental, or so contrived as to border on the maudlin—was all but dead.

IV

The position today is scarcely more hopeful and, to a certain extent, understandably so. Even apart from trends of thought which hold that the international cinema must inevitably reflect the tensions of an unsettled world, there are factors which can, alas, account for the present shortage of charm. Firstly, as was pointed out earlier, a great deal of the responsibility for *genuine* charm has always fallen back on the performer. Today it is only too evident that there are all too few players capable of sustaining, for example, an intelligent dramatic love scene. The Barrymores and the Garbos are no longer with us, and have been replaced by the crew-cut college boys and empty-headed debutantes exemplified by Tony Curtis and Lori Nelson. The decline of the hero has been perhaps even more spectacular than that of the heroine. The chivalrous, gentlemanly hero of the late 'twenties (i.e., Lewis Stone in *The Girl from Montmartre*) has vanished—as a *leading man*—doubtless considered out of date. In *Holiday Affair* (1949), a film typical of many, the heroine plans to marry such a type, who has not only loved her patiently for many years, but in addition is loyal, courteous and a man of integrity and considerable wealth. Yet as soon as the penniless and talentless hero (Robert Mitchum) rudely and obnoxiously pushes his way into her life, the other man is promptly ridiculed and discarded.

Today's star system has also resulted in a method of playing one film for both markets—teen-ager and adult—by the co-starring of players of widely different ages. Alan Ladd and Mona Freeman; Gene Kelly with Debbie Reynolds or Pier Angeli, are typical examples. When one has to watch a film cast, unbelievably, by calculated mathematical formula, all thoughts of spontaneous charm fly out of the window. Star talent is, of course, not the only talent that has declined or disappeared. So many of the directors who delighted us twenty or thirty years ago—Lubitsch, St. Clair, La Cava, Robert Vignola—are no longer with us and have, unhappily, never been replaced.

Perhaps, most of all, the blame lies with the present ruthlessly competitive markets. The star system is on the way out, Hollywood tells us (probably in partial excuse for the fact that there are only a dozen top stars who really mean anything at the box-office any more). . . . spectacle, size, strong story material, these are the things that an allegedly more exacting world audience is demanding. In the face of such opposition, a plaintive plea for "charm"—an almost indefinable quality that you certainly cannot put down in black-and-white along with your screenplay—can scarcely be expected to make much headway. Some of the best of the old sophisticated comedies revolved around plots that were, basically, little more than pleasant trivia. *Are Parents People?* in script form today would hardly get a second look. It would lack sufficient substance to warrant a strong star roster—and as a "B" picture it would scarcely be worth making. This current demand for "plot" and "substance" has taken its toll in other ways. How many films today are as exciting and moving—visually—as was, for example, Von Sternberg's *Docks of New York*? A crowded canvas on the screen does not necessarily mean that the image is worth looking at for its own sake, and off-hand I can think of only two American films of the past year that have preserved that great characteristic of the silent cinema, visual charm and beauty; one was Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright*; the other was George Stevens's *Shane*. Apart from Stevens, Ford, and at most two or three other directors, the visual aspect

of the current American cinema seems, sadly, to be regarded as a matter of supreme unimportance.

Hand in hand with the disappearance of charm, goes the more obvious decline in screen comedy generally. Steadily there has been a falling away from sophistication and wit to a rut of smart-aleck go-getting and violence in which totally undeserving heroes (if one can class Jerry Lewis or Bob Hope as a "hero" in the Langdon or Chaplin sense) have somehow and tastelessly blundered thr

occasional welcome—and much-needed—surprises. *Father of the Bride* was one. *Dream Wife* was quite an enjoyable oasis of sophistication. But against this one has the ugliness and vulgarity of a film like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (which, ironically, had been made earlier as a very pleasing and quite gentle silent by St. Clair).

Perhaps, however, one should be grateful for small mercies. There's always hope when the occasional *Lime-light* comes along. The charm of *Lili* was perhaps rather artificial—but the care with which it was created certainly indicated recognition of the *need* for charm. And *Roman Holiday* was in many ways a delightful film, though one with strategically placed *high* spots, as opposed to Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* or (a more direct comparison) *The Student Prince*, which were delightful films with occasional *low* spots. Like so many of the best earlier comedies, *Roman Holiday* had only a tenuous and insubstantial plot; but in treatment it endeavoured to recapture this vanishing quality of charm, and to a certain extent it succeeded.

Present-day markets seem to demand "raw" drama, spectacle, sex and tough stuff generally, and it would be foolhardy to imagine that the powers-that-be would oppose the wishes of these markets. Yet the unexpected success of slight films such as *Lili*, the box-office performance of imports such as *The Pickwick Papers*, *Genevieve* and *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, and the reintroduction of the "elfin" heroine (Audrey Hepburn, June Thorburn and Pat Crowley) are perhaps pointers in the right direction. Hollywood is always impressed by box-office performance, and when it takes time out to realise that *Lili* has been running for nearly a year at a New York cinema, with no noticeable dropping off of receipts, it may also recall that some of the biggest money-making names in the business—Shearer, Gish, Chaplin, St. Clair, Lubitsch and others—came from and stayed in essentially gentle schools.



Leslie Caron in "Lili": "... recognition of the need for charm".

A REVIEW OF REVIEWS



John
Grierson

SIGHT AND SOUND has invited John Grierson to contribute a regular, independent column over the next year. He has chosen to write a series of commentaries on the state of contemporary film criticism: "A Review of Reviews." Having, as it were, invited a knife in the back, the editors would stress the usual proviso—the opinions expressed here are not necessarily their own.

When I was asked by *SIGHT AND SOUND* to do a column, I suggested a review of reviews. I did so because I have been restive for some time about the state of film criticism. I have not been alone in this. No sooner had I thought of a review of reviews than the *Kine Weekly* initiated one, and, as they told me, with the same sense of disturbance. Each week, the critics are set over against each other in their coverage of individual pictures, and a pretty contradictory mess they generally make of it. But it is the sort of thing *SIGHT AND SOUND* should do, as a magazine devoted of its nature to the nature of criticism. The *Kine's* column is interesting as illustrating the loss of respect for what the critics are saying. This, if true, is a highly important matter affecting the life of the cinema itself.

The *Kine* is simple in its conclusions. It thinks the critics, with a few exceptions, are a pretty tired lot, bored with movie and showing it. It thinks that many of them have got out of touch with the cinema as a mass medium and, more important, with the æsthetics of the cinema as a mass medium. It feels that criticism for the most part is content to be journalistically smart without consideration of its creative duty.

Up to a point I agree with this position. But if, in fact, the critics are out of touch with the masses and with the cinema as a mass art, their influence on cinema-going must surely be diminishing. We would be foolish, therefore, to regard them as dangerous, except in their default.

My own concern is almost entirely with the default. I believe in criticism as an important form of leadership: necessary to the people and necessary to the arts. I don't like to see it failing in its creative duties. Its first duty I hold to be no less than its aid in the making of films and the making of film-makers. Its second I hold to be the stirring of the people to the perception of larger hori-

zons of enjoyment. By this, be it noted, I do not mean, necessarily or only, the horizons of literate enjoyment. I mean the works and down to the belly laugh.

But let us say this for the critics. Film journalism demands a day to day fervour about day to day movies. It isn't as easy as it looks: not in continuity it isn't. One must expect the critics to nod and slip, as often they do. Likewise a long persistence in this fervour, as in the case of Lejeune, Powell, Billings and Harman, is something one cannot fail to admire, as one admires the something or other in long distance walkers. Your professional critic also has to paw the air promiscuously and all the time. It is a demanding trade and not least now when, as we are all aware, the first fine careless rapture of the cinema is over and done with, and we reach on all sides a little desolately for the renewal and still further extension of the cinema's powers of observation.

I owe this courtesy to the critics. I loosed off too harshly against them recently in *SIGHT AND SOUND's* symposium on what the producers thought of the critics and *vice versa*. I said, if I remember, that the average racing correspondent knew more and worked harder for his money than any film critic I knew. That, of course, was to make a special point. What I was really reflecting was the dissatisfaction shared by producers and critics alike: not so much in each other's work as in the present phase of the cinema itself. We are in the same boat, and it is for the moment in the doldrums. We blame each other: the one for not making, the other for not seeing.

For my part, I accuse the critics of standing on the side lines waiting for the producers to stir up the new phases of film. I say let them help stir, as of course they can. I feel the critic is failing in his job when he sits above the battle and talks of "magisterial" seats and the like. There are irritating instances of this all the time. One critic will say impertinently that the only importance is in what *he*—or sometimes *she*—likes. Another is capable of the phrase: "I'll wait till you show *me*." The latest example is from Paul Holt: "Now I'll tell you what I think about the film, Norman." This sort of thing is creeping in everywhere and is all rather self-important and exhibitionist and silly. Criticism as a work of service to the creative forces ought of its nature to be pretty humble. The big thing around the corner is never the criticism but always the discovery.

Above all, your critic can back the tentative effort, and at the right time. The right time is always long before it commands the grander notice of acknowledged mastery. It is pretty certain to be long before the talent is sure of itself and just when it is vulnerable. Speaking in Belfast the other day I quoted as an example of what the film critic didn't do the welcome accorded in the daily Press to the young Irish featherweight Billy King, on his first venture into the London ring. It was appreciative and it was excited as something new and possibly wonderful was appearing. I said I hadn't known anything like that happening to a young film director for a long time. You remember Burke's phrase about Marie Antoinette: "*I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and animating that sphere she just began to move in*". It is surely the true measure of creative appreciation.

What may be a really horrid aspect of this critical failure, and I am as guilty as anyone, is that by lack of warmth at the right time we allow talents to disappear or diminish. It is here, I think, that the critic owes a most

sensitive duty to the cinema as a living art. You remember Dilys Powell's crazy idea that the critics should not meet film-makers? Doesn't it sound the crazier when you think of the sensitive talents that get lost for not being personally known? Remember, cinema is not like writing or painting, where the personal talent can be more precisely sorted out. It is a complex art in which the individual contribution is always difficult to assess. The film talent may not be in normal terms articulate. One or two of the best film-makers made an awful mess of their contribution to the symposium I mentioned. They just didn't sound their size. There may be cinematic talents that have no great power to command public attention, except on the screen. Some of us can write and speak our heads off and get a lot more attention than we deserve. The others may not be the less talented, may even be the more so, because it isn't in their nature. Coming up, they need the critics: they can't do a thing without the critics.

This tendency effectively to discourage the unestablished has, I think, a serious effect on the art of the cinema. In the matter of films the attention of the industry is commanded of course by the box-office wallop that goes with them; and this is by no means the uncreative force the more snobbish critics think it to be. But in the matter of individuals, notice is determined to a considerable extent by critical notice. You can readily understand why this is. The public will break through all the arrangements of the critics and the bookers to welcome a film which has something they somehow want. They were notably articulate about *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, in spite of what their leaders said. Negatively they were equally articulate about *The Queen of Spades* and *The Magic Box*, whatever was pretentiously said about them.

But how could they be expected to be articulate about individuals, and least of all about technicians, or about individuals who are just coming along and are still without the benefit of publicity? Here the critic's duty is unique. I know there are exceptions. Chaplin was one. The people found him long before the critics, as the people have found their music-hall personalities, and more recently their radio ones. On the other hand, as I well remember, it took the critics to discover Clara Bow and Thelma Todd and Jimmy Cagney and Gary Cooper and a host of others. That was in the days when discovery was expected of a critic and his status depended largely on his discoveries. The so-called building of a star is a deliberate process, born of the judgment of the critical leadership. Over a large area of film effort, if the critics don't see, the individuals don't get.

One other aspect of criticism interests me especially at the moment. Like Lejeune, I came out of those earlier days of the cinema when the medium was finding its first sense of form. Travelogues were reaching towards Flaherty, Westerns to Cruze, slapstick follies to Chaplin and the sevenpenny novelette to Griffith and Stroheim. Early criticism was therefore as speculative as film-making itself. We built up our theory of film not only to give significance to the new things we saw, but to help the film-makers to realise where they were going. There was a consequent creative bond between critics and film-makers. My life-long association with Flaherty began when I was writing for the *New York Sun*. It was not simply a case of Flaherty thanking me for a flattering review. It was a case of our being commonly interested in what his then experimental approach meant. There was the same relationship in the early period of the epics, when Hollywood companies like Paramount begged the critics to help them articulate the difference they meant. New York criticisms

of pictures like *Ben Hur* and *The Big Parade* were telegraphed back to Hollywood for what they taught or seemed to teach: and this applied even to the criticism of films which Hollywood had not itself made. I am thinking in particular of the professional reception of the criticism which grew up around strange newcomers like *Potemkin* and *Vaudeville*.

That direct interest in the critics' power of creative suggestion has diminished, and the working relation of critic and producer is no longer a reality. Powell's point about not knowing the film-makers is, in this sense, the rationalisation of a derelict position. Unfortunately the critics are not very much sought after either. It means surely that the critic and the producer are no longer thought of as in active working relationship. It involves, I think, the proposition that film-making is no longer speculative: and that if it has new worlds to conquer it is to forms and rules already established. It means likewise that criticism is no longer speculative and seeking to teach the film-makers where they are or might be going.

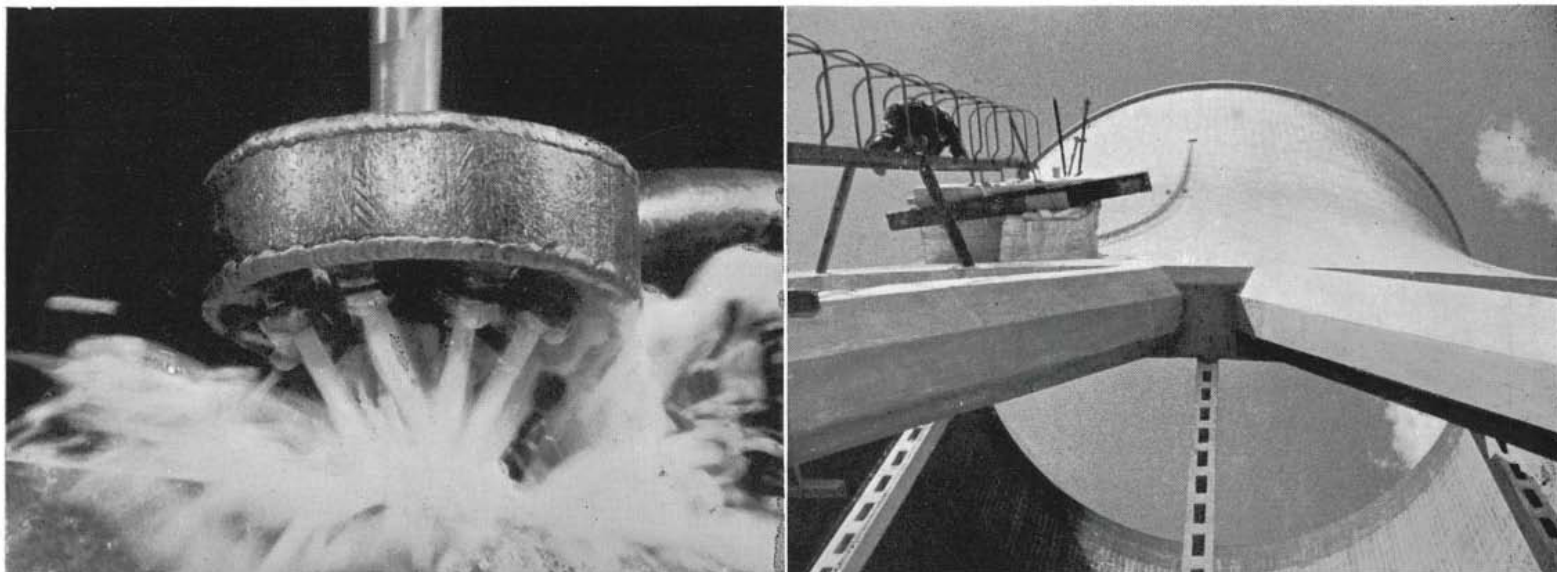
I deplore this impasse and for reasons intrinsic to the nature of the cinema. It is above all an art of observation, and there is no limit either to the intensity or to the extent of its power to observe. That is what Zavattini was saying the other day in his wonderful article in *SIGHT AND SOUND* on the neo-realism of Italy. Observation is all, he was saying. It was, of course, merely a restatement, and a necessary one, of what we all knew, or said we knew, a long time ago. And in spite of the costs which have been bringing us closer to the studio, and to the limited time schedules for production, I beg we remember all that Zavattini implies.

I cannot think that the speculative period is over just because the cinema has confirmed its hold on particular areas of dramatic effort. I would even say that if we have arrived at a stage when speculation is less ardent than it was, the more reason there is to return criticism to speculation. That is the law in philosophy. In fact the greatest periods in speculative philosophy have arisen when things were being taken most for granted. So far as art is concerned, it involves a maximum interest in experiment and in fresh and different talent. It involves, if I may say so to the Film Societies, a minimum interest in what has already been achieved. Nothing gets in the way of speculation so much as old achievements and old theories: particularly when they become nostalgic standards for the contemporary effort.

One great sinner in this respect has been *SIGHT AND SOUND* itself. Anderson recently has been telling us how wonderful Stroheim was and how weak our present-day stuff is in comparison. Well, some of us knew how good Stroheim was when he first came along, and we said so, and we fought his battles for him at the right time. Now, when these younger people come along to tell us, not only what we already knew, but what we actually discovered for them, I have the odd thought that they would be doing better to discover something for themselves in the here and now. In the living, ever-researching, ever-discovering medium of the cinema, it is only discovery in the here and now that can fundamentally matter.

I know it can be said for the *SIGHT AND SOUND* critics that they are right to measure films by the highest standards they know. There is a point in this. My own comment is that the highest end of all is to create, or induce creation, and that is never a matter of looking backward to the certainties, but almost always the uncertain, tentative and risky business of guessing the future.

(Continued on page 222)



Two Shell Film Unit productions : left, "Machining of Metals" ; a cutting fluid distributor ; right, "The Stanlow Story" ; looking up the interior of an oil refinery cooling tower.

SHELL FILM UNIT: TWENTY-ONE YEARS

Stuart Legg

TO visit the Shell Film Unit for the first time is to receive the impression that you are entering a hospital. There is a clean, polished, antiseptic air about it. The walls—except where broken by rows of framed awards and diplomas won at international festivals—are white-painted and shining. You could cut negative on the floors. The editing-rooms resemble operating theatres in their Spartan impersonality. The litter of books and papers native to production offices is different from what you would expect. To begin with, there is no litter. Running your eye along tidy shelves, you will search in vain for Pudovkin on *Film Technique* or Grierson on *Documentary*; and the usual compost-heaps of half-written, half-forgotten scripts are absent. In their place you will find blueprints of drilling-rigs, tanker-jetties, refinery flow-charts; treatises on the gas turbine, diesel operation, parasitology; the current motor racing yearbooks; encyclopædias on the history, nature, extraction and manufacture of petroleum; and tucked away in a drawer—just in case discussion should become elementary—log tables, slide rules, and the standard handbooks on heat, light and sound. The place has a character of its own, and the pictures that emerge from it have a corresponding stamp. You can always tell a Shell film from the first hundred feet, even if you have missed the simple statement of origin on the credits which is all the "advertising" they carry. The spare, precise economy of presentation is unmistakable: as also is the uncompromising faithfulness to technological fact and logic. From these, Shell's films derive their fascination, their beauty, and their now almost legendary reputation.

The Shell Film Unit was among the earliest nuclei of documentary in Britain. It was preceded only by British Instructional Films (which became G.-B. Instructional, which became the G.-B. Specialised Unit) and the Empire Marketing Board Unit (which became the G.P.O., which became Crown, which died to save the sterling area). In the Shell records, it is first mentioned in 1933, when

Grierson, at the invitation of the Publicity Department, reported on film possibilities in relation to the Company's work and recommended the establishment of a film branch. Even before this, however, the names of Shell and Jack Beddington had been associated with the sponsorship of films made by, among others, Paul Rotha, Humphrey Jennings and Len Lye.

The setting up of the Unit followed within a few weeks of Grierson's report; and in 1934 Edgar Anstey became its first producer, with D'Arcy Cartwright and Graham Tharpe as directors and Stanley Rodwell as cameraman. The first film was *Airport*, a two-reel study of Croydon, then the last word in civil aviation termini. The fates—and the Trade Press—were kind. On October 26th, 1935, *Today's Cinema* reported that *Airport* was "concise . . . consistent in its interest and good to look upon and listen to." But perhaps a film which had started simultaneously, but had been delayed by difficulties in production, was in the long run more significant of the future. Francis Rodker, who had been an engineering draughtsman in one of the associated companies, had joined Anstey to prepare the drawings for a film on the principles of the internal combustion engine. Rodker did more than make these drawings. Surmounting a painful succession of technical problems and teething troubles, he initiated the S.F.U.'s animation section; and when *Power Unit* finally appeared two years later, he had laid the foundation for the wonderful range and variety of diagram work that now forms so inherent and so distinguished a part of most Shell films.

Meanwhile, a change in administrative policy had been taking place. It was decided that while members of the Unit should be an integral part of Shell's staff, creative direction should be engaged from outside on a consultancy basis. From this decision stemmed the appointment of Arthur Elton (and, through him, of Film Centre) as film adviser to Shell and producer to the S.F.U.—an arrange-

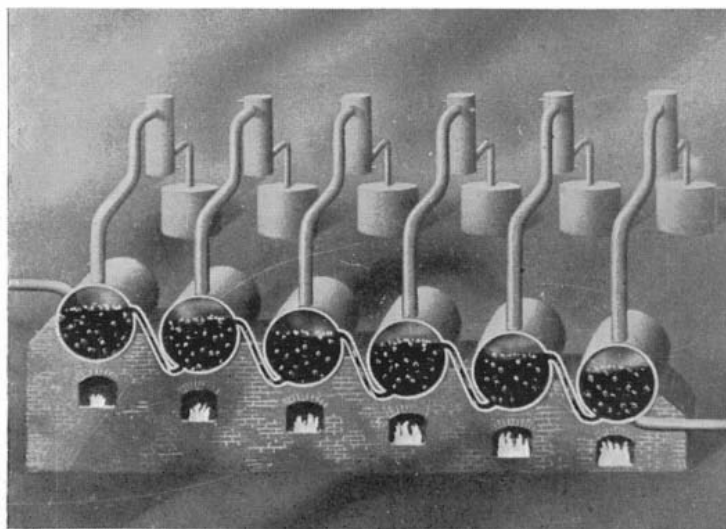


Diagram work : a diagram of distilling furnaces from "Distillation."

ment which has continued to the present day.

The films were now multiplying; and in October, 1939, another milestone in the Unit's career was reached. Dilyss Powell then wrote in *The Sunday Times*: "The most exciting and beautiful film I saw last week was not the story of Wallace Beery's battle with the U-Boats, not Ralph Bellamy's struggle with the spy-ring, not Raimu and Fernandel's fight with the American pugilist, but a film about the evolution of the gear wheel. It is called *Transfer of Power*. Baldly, its theme is the principle of the lever. [It gives] a short but dazzling demonstration of human genius for invention."

Just as *Power Unit* had contributed to a new level of animation, so Elton, Geoffrey Bell and Sidney Beadle set a new style with *Transfer of Power*. And it was more than a style. It was a new approach to production, which has since grown and branched and flowered into a "Shell tradition" that is unique in film-making. This *weltanschauung* is a strange blend of apparent opposites. In the first place, the Unit's personnel are, and nearly always have been, as much technologists, engineers, oilmen by inclination as they are directors and editors by profession. Bill Mason is a racing motorist in his own right. Denis Segaller could probably run a refinery with very tolerable competence. Geoffrey Hughes could doubtless lecture on marine drilling to the Inst.Mech.E. without disgracing the engineering profession. Peter de Normanville perhaps knows as much about axial flow compressors as anyone outside Rolls Royce decently should. It is quite possible that Philip Armitage could control the tanker fleet for twenty-four hours without running anything aground. All of them are primarily interested in the world they bring to the screen for its own sake; and this gives them a set of film values different from the norm. The S.F.U. has little use for the accepted canons of showmanship. It is not, indeed, too much to say that it is anti-showman. Yet undeniably the Unit possesses a showmanship—of its own.

True, it has contributed much to creative production experiment, notably in the development of fresh forms of expository treatment and in the imaginative building of sound-track. It has carried animation over into combinations of reality with representation that had not been attempted on the screen before. It has tried out most of

the colour systems, and has made a film in 3-D. But the ingredients of Shell's particular quality, the overtones that seem to leave its films in the memory of audiences all over the world, derive from other and simpler sources. The S.F.U. starts from the scientific fact, and seldom departs therefrom. Thus its drama is essentially one of revelation, frequently of the quietest sort. It lies in the mastery of ingenious (and often in themselves scientific) camera techniques, sometimes specially evolved to enable the fact, the behaviour, the phenomenon, to be brought to the screen at all. It lies in the stark, academic manner in which cause and effect are allowed to unfold by and for themselves, without adorning fuss. It is perhaps not accidental that hardly a Shell film carries a credit to a commentary writer; it is one of the few units that still believe in the primacy of the visual. It lies, also, in the sparing but significant use of the special effect; of an unexpected chord or a staccato sound to add an emphasis, clinch a conclusion, point a proof. In the films of this Unit, devoted ostensibly (and very really) to publicising the background of oil and oil products, there is something of the gentle-mannered yet sharply penetrating flavour of the learned society; something of the stripped-down, clear-cut inevitability of Euclid, something, above all, peculiarly English and Eltonic. Shell's fade-outs, one feels, should read not "The End" but "Q.E.D."

Perhaps their secret lies in the fact that they have successfully—probably because unconsciously—achieved, within the limits of their own field, a genuine communication between science and the ordinary world. In the larger terms, it is a communication that many men, in many media, have sought and failed to achieve—Dr. Oppenheimer among them. Showmanship, the S.F.U. would hold (if it could be brought to use the word), is latent in the scientific approach itself; it is only a question of knowing where to look, and of looking with respect.

This outlook has led to a way of film-making which has nothing to do with the cultivation of beauty, yet can produce it in breathtaking forms; nothing to do with æsthetic, yet appears to be creating a branch of it filled with contemporary meaning; nothing to do with polity, yet which might, in other circumstances, become a potent force therein. Look at some of the titles: *Atomisation*; *History of the Helicopter*; *An Introduction to the Heat Engine*; *Distillation*. Forbidding? A single example must suffice to indicate what lies behind these apparently unbending façades. In the Shell catalogue there is a film rejoicing in the chilly name of *Frost*—a demonstration, photographed by Alan Fabian, of the behaviour of frost in orchards, and of means of protecting fruit trees from it during the critical weeks of bud-burst. It is impossible to film the flow of cold air at night for the good reason that it is invisible. The director therefore fell back on analogy: that of moving cloud shadows. The resulting revelation of a complicated and as yet little explored subject was crystal clear. But the analogy—chosen for purely technical reasons—transformed scientific prose into pastoral poetry of compelling loveliness.

Transfer of Power was instrumental in setting this pattern. It appeared, however, in 1939. During the following years, much of the S.F.U.'s personnel and facilities were turned over to Government work; and since the Government at once recognised the value of the Unit's special flair for technology, its opportunities for cohesive

extension of the pioneering already done were considerable. Its war record was remarkable for range and width. At one end of the scale it issued, for cinema distribution, a series of surveys—notable for their dynamic cartography—of the strategies involved in the different theatres. At the other, it produced, among many other films for the Admiralty, a herculean work of *Gone With the Wind* proportions: a four-part epic, totalling more than three hours' running time, entitled *The Care and Maintenance of Asdic Equipment*. Elton, then serving in the M.O.I., was so moved by its gargantuan majesty that he wrote, between gargantuan sobs: "This series is almost unique. Rarely has so complicated a subject been treated so lucidly and in such detail."

In between, there was a host of films—for the Ministry of Home Security on techniques of civil defence and rescue; for the mechanised and specialised branches of the Services. There was *Malaria*, showing the life-cycle of the mosquito and the parasite, and sketching methods of prevention. It was adapted by the British, American, Indian and Australian Armies, and shown in every theatre of war where the disease was present. There was *The Sten Machine Carbine*, which must have had the strangest distribution ever accorded to a picture. It was produced in close secrecy, sub-titled in many European languages, and dropped into occupied territory. For obvious reasons, it was a silent film. And it is recorded that late in the war "the M.O.I. invited the Unit to attempt a film for the cinemas to assist the Department of Inland Revenue to explain P.A.Y.E. to the public." Evidently not even Shell's capacity for technical exposition could cope with this, for the record dryly concludes: "The subject was found unsuited to film treatment and abandoned."

It is since the war that the Unit has come into its own, and also that another important characteristic of its film policy has become evident. With certain recognised exceptions, the S.F.U. seldom makes a film to mark an occasion the significance of which may pass. It is rather concerned with the cumulative fostering of interest in selected areas of subject-matter where films can make a clear contribution to the spread of information or answer a well-defined demand. And it enters these areas, once selected, with a Vatican-like length of view and sense of continuity. Thus its yearly programme provides not only for a number of new films, but for the initiation of a new group or for additions to existing ones. In 1945 came *Lift*, the first of a series to which have subsequently been added *Drag*, *Thrust*, *Forces in Balance*, *Stability*, *Controls*. Under the generic title *How an Aeroplane Flies*, this group is now used *en bloc* by almost every Air Force in the western world (including the U.S.A.F.); and still receives regular additions. The next year saw the start of a series of ten films in colour, produced outside by Photomicrography Ltd., on the life-cycles of insect pests. In 1946 also came the first of the famous reports of the S.B.A.C. meetings, which have probably been a real factor in building the popularity of the annual Farnborough show to its present pitch. In 1948 came *Cornish Engine*, a second film on an aspect of industrial history, and thus forming the nucleus of a series with *Transfer of Power*. At the same time there appeared the first of Segaller's group on *Refinery Processes*, which has since grown to four films (*Octane Number*, *Cracking*, *Components for*



"Prospecting for Petroleum": this puppet film, made by George Pal for the American Shell Oil Co., has been adapted by the S.F.U. for world-wide distribution.

Aviation Gasoline, *Aviation Gasoline-Blending*) and is scheduled to continue. More recently, Mason's *Grand Prix* ushered in the motor-racing films which now include *Isle of Man T.T.*, *Monte Carlo Rally*, *Le Mans* and *Mille Miglia*; and which, judging by the insatiable demand for them, seem likely to continue annually for ever. Any any time now the first of Bert Haanstra's able, humorous, exquisitely photographed series on oil production will be ready for release. Some of these groups have given rise to by-product groups for special purposes and audiences. There is, for instance, a film on each of the principal British aircraft designed in recent years. *Cornish Engine* was not, in fact, one film but seven; for in addition a separate record was produced of six of the beam engines still at work in the district. And all this apart from individual films that belong to no set series: Lionel Clore's *Diesel Story*, for example, or de Normanville's *Fell Locomotive*, or Douglas Clark's *Stanlow Story*—each representing its own particular battle with material often to the outward eye barren and intractable, its own particular triumph in communicating the human genius for invention.*

It is quite a record. Indeed, for a unit whose creative staff numbers about twenty, with approximately 150 films so far completed, it is one of the most consistently distinguished and devoted records that documentary anywhere can show. And when one remembers that production represents only one facet of the S.F.U.'s activities, it appears more distinguished still. The Unit is, for example, the hub of a non-theatrical distribution system which must reach as widely across the world as the theatrical business of most American majors, and which counts its annual audience in tens of millions. The scale of its translation work is indicated by the fact that during one recent year it made thirteen versions in Thai. It has instituted a training scheme for technicians from overseas, through which at least fifteen men and women—among them Austrians, Indonesians, Nigerians, Americans—have already passed. And it has been associated with the founding of sister-units or production centres in Holland, Venezuela, Egypt, Australia and India. . . . Quite a record.

* Stuart Legg omits from this record *Powered Flight*, which he produced (see p. 212).

Three from Shell

IN choosing for comment three films from the Shell Film Unit's recent output, one inevitably indicates a personal preference—a preference, that is, for a type of subject matter, rather than for any particular style or treatment. Shell's trademarks, as Stuart Legg says, are clarity, objectivity, the adaptation of technique to fit a specific purpose; lucid observation can fascinate in itself, and a film such as *Cornish Engine* has, for the non-mechanical, something of the rarified attraction of a game of chess between experts. Yet the fact remains that one's mind is not mechanical, that the building of an oil refinery (*Stanlow Story*) is an operation which one is content to contemplate, as it were, from a distance; for me, the motor-racing films (*Le Mans* and *Mille Miglia*), and the compilation record (*Powered Flight*) are the pictures that awaken a personal response.

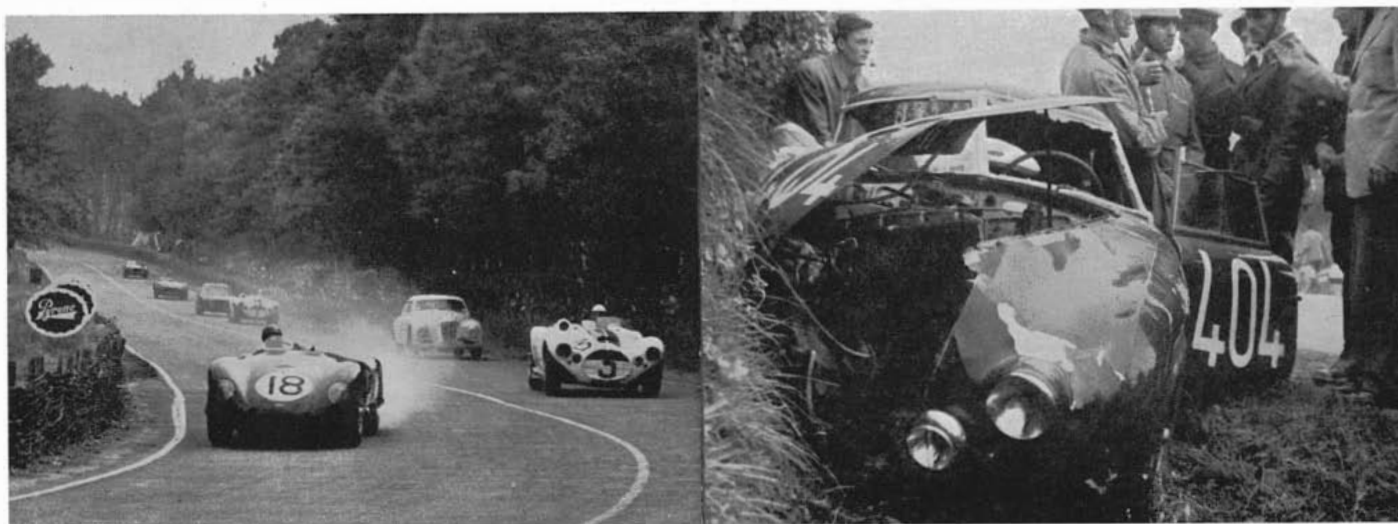
Le Mans, 1952 and *Mille Miglia*, 1953 are the most recent entries in a series—Shell has yet to film the same race twice. Each is essentially a record; straightforward, direct, clear, as Shell's films usually are, so that even in the *Mille Miglia*, with hundreds of cars sprawled across the roads of Italy, the pattern and progress of the race as a whole remain the film's objective. The material, inevitably, fascinates: night scenes, with the headlights sweeping up out of the darkness and across the screen; shots from inside the cars, the cameras shaking so that the road ahead seems to vibrate with the speed; aerial shots in *Mille Miglia*, as the procession of cars winds over the mountain passes; the view of the crowds, notably in the early-morning sequence of *Le Mans*, when the thousands camped out beside the track give to the whole scene something of the air of a gigantic fairground, with the race itself as the principal sideshow; the personalities, such as the driver who sadly and laboriously pushes his car towards the finishing-line, the methodical, confident manager of the German team which won at Le Mans, or Roberto Rossellini, waving acknowledgment to the crowds before retiring from the *Mille Miglia*. It sounds easy enough to transfer this to the screen. Perhaps one only fully appreciates the craftsmanship of the Shell Unit's director, Bill Mason, and of the cameramen (French and Italian as well as British), when these expertly photographed, crisply

edited films are compared with other motor-racing material. By varying the tempo, using the crowds as an integral part of the scene, the Shell films describe not merely the race itself, but the mood and feel of a particular occasion.

An achievement of a different order is *Powered Flight*, produced by Stuart Legg with the advice of Mr. Peter Masfield and Mr. Peter Brooks of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and edited by Ralph Sheldon. The compilation film has been brilliantly adapted to propaganda in, for instance, the war-time *Why We Fight* series; too often, however, valuable material has been thrown together into an ungainly hodge-podge and presented as social history. *Powered Flight* seems to me as considerable an achievement, in its own way, as *Paris 1900*: one of the few instances in which material from diffuse sources has been so brought together that the result appears a valid historical record in its own right. It is true that much of the material is very nearly foolproof; shots of the early pioneers—Wilbur Wright, Blériot, Santos-Dumont and the rest—with their rickety, profoundly unsafe-looking little aeroplanes, of the crowd massing at Orly airport to welcome Lindbergh, of the *Hindenburg* disintegrating in flames (one of the most celebrated newsreel scoops), or the remarkable second world war material (some of it taken from German sources, such as *Baptism of Fire*), would sustain the interest, however presented. The quality of *Powered Flight* reveals itself in the almost continuous fascination of the material, selected from the grand total of fifty years' newsreel and other records, and in a method of presentation which emphasises not merely the event but its significance—the changes in aircraft brought about by the first world war, for instance, the domination of the biplane or the development of the Spitfire. Stuart Legg perhaps won a slight concession to showmanship in such interludes as the brief sequence which cleverly and showily sums up the 'twenties. As a whole, though, the film is not clever but solid, as befits a historical document. It is a film made with a sense of responsibility and, though not perhaps a "typical" Shell product, it seems a picture that only Shell would have made in just this quietly expert way; the technique, in different hands and adapted to different purposes, remains identifiable.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

Motor racing: left, a Jaguar leading the field in the 1952 Le Mans race; right, a Fiat crashes in "Mille Miglia".



A NEW CLOWN

AFTER almost twenty years of the gagman, it would be nice to think that a new generation of screen comedians was rising up; and there seems some hope of this in the emergence of such artists as Jerry Lewis in America, Tati in France and, in this country, Norman Wisdom. Television is an obvious spur to screen comedy, just as the wireless craze of the 'thirties dulled it; the peak of interest in radio and radio personalities reared a generation of performers among whom comedians were for the most part men in dinner jackets who told jokes. Television has brought forward those artists whose work offers something to see as well as something to hear. Ancients like Bransby Williams are given new leases of life; the wisest of the old Broadcasting House school—like Arthur Askey and Eric Barker—fit their style to the new medium; and the new stars—Wisdom, Tommy Cooper, Terry-Thomas—are pure products of television. In its acquisition of Wisdom, it seems that the British film industry has at last managed to turn the tables and to profit from television. The extent of this profit—the success story of Wisdom's first film, *Trouble in Store*—is well known. Its distributors denied it a West End release, yet in its first six days in London—Christmas week—it did 25 per cent above normal business. After a quiet start, there was an explosion of praise and publicity. Records were broken and cinemas filled throughout the country. While the film industry was concentrating its energies on the new catchpennies of wide-screens, deep screens, anamorphic lenses and chocolate-coated popcorn, Norman Wisdom and his old-fashioned black-and-white film became news.

Trouble in Store is not a very good film. It is poorly written and shabbily made; the box-office guarantee co-stars are wasted. Its success is due entirely to Wisdom, a fine droll, with a screen character as strong, in its way, as Langdon's. Unlike many other clowns, Wisdom has a clear conception of this character, of whom he always speaks in the third person. The Gump, as his creator calls him, always *tries* to be right, but never succeeds—except, of course, by a happy last-minute fluke. His motive is a mania—Wisdom himself calls it a mania, regardless of whether an abnormality is a valid stimulus for a comic character—to be friendly. This is not new, of course; the perennial problem of clowns and children is the impossibility in this world of loving and being loved all the time. The resulting rebuffs are the main-spring for the pathos which is an essential of Wisdom's work. His meekness, however, is subject to his enthusiasm; in moments of excitement he becomes possessed, loses all inhibitions, and will collapse in paralytic laughter or run, screaming falsetto, through a crowded street. He can be aggressive. "He will string along so far", Wisdom explains, "but when he finds he is being fooled he will lose his temper. The only trouble is that afterwards he is so repentant that the person who has fooled him can string him along even more easily".

Wisdom's touchstone is that all his business must be possible, and his character and its proper setting are essentially familiar. Social embarrassment of one sort or another provides a good deal of his comic business. In *Trouble in Store* he battles to acquire a dinner jacket to attend the staff dinner, only to find everyone else there in lounge suits; he has to ask which spoon to use; and he completes his embarrassment by setting himself on fire during the managing director's speech. These "shame-dreams", one feels, are the heritage of bitter experience.

Wisdom's chief asset is a mastery of the audience—in



cinema or theatre—which enables him to reduce it to tears within moments of seemingly uncontrollable laughter. He is certainly one of the few artists to have succeeded in making television audiences weep. In this gift of pathos—which interests him greatly—he follows Chaplin. He shares with Chaplin, too, a superiority to his frequent lapses of taste, which are never too extreme to be overborne by the force of his creation. Perhaps the greatest piece of impropriety and the greatest piece of virtuosity seen in the theatre for years was his capping of a sob-story, which could be relied upon to silence the toughest audience, with the Wisdom laugh and, "If you could see your faces!"

One critic has described Wisdom as lacking "elegance" and—idiotic as such comparisons are—the truth of this appears when we compare his execution of gags which we have seen Chaplin perform—the swing door (*The Cure*) or the pill administered through a tube (*The Circus*). He can build up and maintain a comic climax, but he lacks, as yet, the economy and capacity for elegant variation of the earlier generation. Notwithstanding, he has the makings of a great clown, and perhaps of a great screen comedian. The most hopeful sign is the enthusiasm with which he has interested himself in film technique. *Trouble in Store* cannot be taken as a reliable indication of his future in the cinema. Weighed down with box-office safeguards, it exists only for Wisdom's performance, and even that is restricted by the producers' caution. His strange song "Don't Laugh at Me"—his principal pathetic vehicle—is emasculated by irrelevant comic intercuts; and he is given few opportunities to exploit his special gifts. His next film will obviously give him more scope, but Maurice Cowan and John Paddy Carstairs, who appear likely to script, produce and direct it, have not, in *Trouble in Store*, shown themselves worthy of their star. It would be a pity if Wisdom's screen career failed for want of a sympathetic director, and it is impossible not to remember Langdon with and without Capra. The most interesting speculation on the future of British films is whether Norman Wisdom will be the nine-day wonder of some of the radio comics who entered films in the 'thirties, or whether he may be Britain's first native-working contribution to screen comedy.

DAVID ROBINSON.



FILMS FROM FRANCE

Mam'zelle Nitouche

This operetta by Meilhac and Millaud was filmed in the early 'thirties by Marc Allegret; in the new version, directed by Yves Allegret, Fernandel plays the part then taken by Raimu, and Pier Angeli (above) is Mam'zelle Nitouche.



Le Blé en Herbe

Left, Nicole Berger and Pierre Michel Beck in a scene from *Le Blé en Herbe*, based on the novel by Colette.

Above, Colette with Nicole Berger, Pierre Michel Beck and the director, Claude Autant-Lara.



THE CINEMA

Virginia Woolf

Most of the writers whose articles we have published in "The Film Folio" have emphasised the limitations and shortcomings of the cinema. In this characteristic essay, Virginia Woolf makes some familiar reservations—the film's dependence on the novel, the results "disastrous to both." But she also imagines, although vaguely and tentatively, the cinema's discovery of some "new symbol for expressing thought."

"The Cinema," written in 1926, appeared in the collection of Virginia Woolf's essays, "The Captain's Death Bed" (1950). The essay, which has been slightly abridged here, is reprinted by permission of Mr. Leonard Woolf and the Hogarth Press.

People say that the savage no longer exists in us, that we are at the fag-end of civilisation, that everything has been said already, and that it is too late to be ambitious. But these philosophers have presumably forgotten the movies. They have never seen the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures. They have never sat themselves in front of the screen and thought how for all the clothes on their backs and the carpets at their feet, no great distance separates them from those bright-eyed naked men who knocked two bars of iron together and heard in that clangour a foretaste of the music of Mozart.

The bars in this case, of course, are so highly wrought and so covered over with accretions of alien matter that it is extremely difficult to hear anything distinctly. All is hubble-bubble, swarm and chaos. . . . Yet at first sight the art of the cinema seems simple, even stupid. There is the King shaking hands with a football team; there is Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht; there is Jack Horner winning the Grand National. The eye licks it all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think. For the ordinary eye, the English unæsthetic eye, is a simple mechanism which takes care that the body does not fall down coal-holes, provides the brain with toys and sweetmeats to keep it quiet, and can be trusted to go on behaving like a competent nursemaid until the brain comes to the conclusion that it is time to wake up. What is its purpose, then, to be roused suddenly in the midst of its agreeable somnolence and asked for help? The eye is in difficulties. The eye wants help. The eye says to the brain: "Something is happening which I do not in the least understand. You are needed." Together they look at the King, the boat, the horse, and the brain sees at once that they have taken on a quality which does not belong to the simple photograph of real life. They have become not more beautiful in the sense in which pictures are beautiful, but shall we call it (our vocabulary is miserably insufficient) more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive in daily life? We behold them as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it. The horse will not knock us down. The King will not grasp our hands. The wave will not wet our feet. From this point of vantage, as we watch the antics of our kind, we have time to feel pity and amusement, to generalise, to endow one man with the attributes of the race. Watching the boat sail and the wave break, we have time to open our minds wide to beauty, and register on top of it the queer sensation—this beauty will continue, and this beauty will flourish whether we behold it or not. Further, all this happened ten years ago, we are told. We are beholding a world which has gone beneath the waves. Brides are emerging from the abbey—they are now mothers; ushers are ardent—they are now silent; mothers are tearful;

guests are joyful; this has been won and that has been lost, and it is over and done with. The war sprung its chasm at the feet of all this innocence and ignorance, but it was thus that we danced and pirouetted, toiled and desired, thus that the sun shone and the clouds scudded, up to the very end.

But the picture-makers seem dissatisfied with such obvious sources of interest as the passage of time and the suggestiveness of reality. They despise the flight of gulls, ships on the Thames, the Prince of Wales, the Mile End Road, Piccadilly Circus. They want to be improving, altering, making an art of their own—naturally, for so much seems to be within their scope. So many arts seemed to stand by ready to offer their help. For example, there was literature. All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to the moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. The eye says: "Here is Anna Karenina." A voluptuous lady in black velvet wearing pearls comes before us. But the brain says: "That is no more Anna Karenina than it is Queen Victoria." For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind—her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema upon her teeth, her pearls, and her velvet. Then "Anna falls in love with Vronsky"—that is to say, the lady in black velvet falls into the arms of a gentleman in uniform and they kiss with enormous succulence, great deliberation and infinite gesticulation on a sofa in an extremely well-appointed library, while a gardener incidentally mows the lawn. So we spell them out in words of one syllable, written, too, in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy. A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse. None of these things has the least connexion with the novel that Tolstoy wrote, and it is only when we give up trying to connect the pictures with the book that we guess from some accidental scene—like the gardener mowing the lawn—what the cinema might do if left to its own devices.

But what, then, are its devices? If it ceased to be a parasite, how would it walk erect? At present it is only from hints that one can frame any conjecture. For instance, at a performance of *Dr. Caligari* the other day a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more

effectively than by words. The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement: "I am afraid." In fact, the shadow was accidental and the effect unintentional. But if a shadow at a certain moment can suggest so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women in a state of fear, it seems plain that the cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression. Terror has besides its ordinary forms the shape of a tadpole; it burgeons, bulges, quivers, disappears. Anger is not merely rant and rhetoric, red faces and clenched fists. It is perhaps a black line wriggling upon a white sheet. Anna and Vronsky need no longer scowl and grimace. They have at their command—but what? Is there, we ask, some secret language which we feel and see but never speak and, if so, could this be made visible to the eye? Is there any characteristic which thought possesses that can be rendered visible without the help of words? It has speed and slowness; dartlike directness and vaporous circumlocution. But it has also, especially in moments of emotion, the picture-making power, the need to lift its burden to another bearer; to let an image run side by side along with it. The likeness of the thought is for some reason more beautiful, more comprehensible, more available, than the thought itself. As everybody knows, in Shakespeare the most complex ideas form chains of images through which we mount, changing and turning, until we reach the light of day. But obviously the images of a poet are not to be cast in bronze or traced by pencil. They are compact of a thousand suggestions of which the visual is only the most obvious or the uppermost. Even the simplest image, "My love's like a red, red rose, that's newly-sprung in June," presents us with impressions of moisture and warmth and the glow of crimson and the softness of petals inextricably mixed and strung upon the lilt of a rhythm which is itself the voice of the passion and hesitation of the lover. All this, which is accessible to words and to words alone, the cinema must avoid.

Yet if so much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing, some residue of visual emotion which is of no use either to painter or to poet may still await the cinema. That such symbols will be quite unlike the real objects which we see before us seems highly probable. Something abstract, something which moves with con-

trolled and conscious art, something which calls for the very slightest help from words or music to make itself intelligible, yet justly uses them subserviently—of such movements and abstractions the films may in time to come be composed. Then indeed when some new symbol for expressing thought is found, the film-maker has enormous riches at his command. The exactitude of reality and its surprising power of suggestion are to be had for the asking. Annas and Vronskys—there they are in the flesh. If into this reality he could breathe emotion, could animate the perfect form with thought, then his booty could be hauled in hand over hand. Then, as smoke pours from Vesuvius, we should be able to see thought in its wildness, in its beauty, in its oddity, pouring from men with their elbows on a table; from women with their little handbags slipping to the floor. We should see these emotions mingling together and affecting each other.

We should see violent changes of emotion produced by their collision. The most fantastic contrasts could be flashed before us with a speed which the writer can only toil after in vain. . . . No fantasy could be too far-fetched or insubstantial. The past could be unrolled, distances annihilated, and the gulfs which dislocate novels (when, for instance, Tolstoy has to pass from Levin to Anna and in doing so jars his story and wrenches and arrests our sympathies) could by the sameness of the background, by the repetition of some scene, be smoothed away.

How all this is to be attempted, much less achieved, no one at the moment can tell us. We get intimations only in the chaos of the streets, perhaps, when some momentary assembly of colour, sound, movement suggests that here is a scene waiting for a new art to be transfixed. And sometimes at the cinema in the midst of its immense dexterity and enormous technical proficiency, the curtain parts and we behold, far off, some unknown and unexpected beauty. But it is for a moment only. For a strange thing has happened—while all the other arts were born naked, this, the youngest, has been born fully-clothed. It can say everything before it has anything to say. It is as if the savage tribe, instead of finding two bars of iron to play with, had found scattering the seashore fiddles, flutes, saxophones, trumpets, grand pianos by Erard and Bechstein, and had begun with incredible energy, but without knowing a note of music, to hammer and thump upon them all at the same time.

The Seventh Art

A Queen is Crowned: Too slow-moving for our situation . . . this picture will not please the action fans. (Utah cinema manager's report on "What the Picture Did For Me," *Motion Picture Herald*.)

★

"The panoramic effect keeps you close to the actors, and still gets them all in. You could show fifteen people lined up at a snack bar counter and catch every one of them from the tops of their heads to below their waists!" (Cameraman Leon Shamroy on CinemaScope.)

★

For some years Marilyn Monroe's closest friend has been her dramatic coach Natasha Lytées, a product of the exacting methods of the late Max Reinhardt. Marilyn bid £400 for eighty volumes of plays annotated by Reinhardt against four of America's richest universities. . . . Marilyn is continuing to study Reinhardt's methods through Miss Lytées and available new books. She is studying his approach to Shakespeare, Shaw, Goethe and other classic writers. (20th Century-Fox publicity hand-out.)

★

VATICAN PRAISES JANE RUSSELL. (*Daily Express* headline.)

"Members of our Board feel that in adhering to the [Production] Code they are fulfilling a solemn and unbreakable obligation to the public to provide decent and moral entertainment on the screen. . . . The Code, like the Constitution of the United States, is a living document for living people." (Letter from Eric Johnson, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, to Sam Goldwyn, quoted in the *Kinematograph Weekly*.)

★

An old woman walked into a Nottingham cinema showing a 3-D film. She refused special glasses, saying: "I have never worn glasses and I'm not starting now." She watched without them, and on the way out said: "I enjoyed the film, but it did seem a bit blurred." (*Daily Herald*.)

★

"The picture that helped to win the war." (Caption to a still from *Mrs. Miniver* in M-G-M's 30th Anniversary brochure.)

★

"You wouldn't get the British public putting coins in the slot for anything that was unsavoury." (Herbert Wilcox on pay-as-you-see television—*The Star*.)

Book Reviews

A TREE IS A TREE, by King Vidor. Illustrated. (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.95).*

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

Not many distinguished film-makers seem to be also articulate in words—at least, not in print. And this is not altogether surprising. For in an art in which intellect is more usually suspect than welcome, there is inevitable prejudice against a director with “ideas” of his own, and (even more sinister) the ability to express them. In the English-speaking cinema such matters are by common consent the responsibility of the publicity department. Any director with ambitions to remain in the business will be wise to refrain from committing to paper his personal opinions or revelations. For all the acres of gossip and reportage which the cinema unceasingly occasions, its real scandals, its significant myths must remain the property of a closed circle of initiates.

King Vidor is in this respect one of the wise. His autobiography is written for the popular audience rather than for the initiates; there is no attempt at completeness; the style is chatty, with nothing to tax the reader's power of concentration. And yet *A Tree is a Tree* is an exceptional book. Vidor writes modestly, with humour and sincerity; he makes no claim to sophistication, and his simple seriousness is quite unabashed, and very likeable. “*When is a creative artist's work expressing the quality that he alone can give it? What are the causes that contribute to an artist getting off the beam? If this book is honest, as I intend it to be, some of the answers will be evident in these pages.*”

Such a statement from Vidor makes one turn to his book with particular interest; for of all the cinema's great, or near-great, men, he is surely one of the most puzzling. The titles of his triumphs have a ring to them that still reverberates: *The Big Parade*, *The Crowd*, *Hallelujah*, *Our Daily Bread*. Yet the most recent of these was made twenty years ago, and the first three—in common with the majority of great American silent films—are locked away from us in the vaults. During the later 'thirties, Vidor's work varied so widely in subject and quality (*So Red the Rose*, *The Texas Rangers*, *The Citadel*) that it is not easy to find in it a recognisable creative personality. And in the last few years, with a succession of weird, sensational pictures, overblown in style and pregnant with a peculiar violence and sexuality, he has become the hero of a half-admiring, half-mocking minor cult. “*I had always felt the impulse to use the motion-picture screen as an expression of hope and faith, to make films presenting positive ideas and ideals rather than negative themes. When I have occasionally strayed from this early resolve, I have accomplished nothing but regret.*” So writes Vidor in 1953: it is not quite the declaration one would expect from the director (and co-producer) of *Ruby Gentry*.

Where such an apparent split exists between principle and practice, it would be remarkable if the artist were himself able to give us the reason for his going so far “off the beam.” Vidor does not in fact acknowledge the problem openly, and a good deal of conjecture remains necessary. About his personal life he is particularly reticent. He was born in 1896, in Galveston, Texas; his people were Christian Scientists; his father a “fairly prosperous lumberman.” Three marriages are recorded, generally in asides; only from the dedication do we gather that these have been blessed with a number of children and grandchildren. That is about all we are told. The subject of the book is really Vidor in films, but even his professional life is unevenly chronicled: of his recent work, for instance, he says almost nothing. “In 1945 I accepted an assignment from Warner Brothers to direct a film, starring Gary Cooper, based on the controversial novel, *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand. After this I found myself involved with *Beyond the Forest*, with Bette Davis and Joseph Cotten.” “My most recent picture, *Ruby Gentry*, was doing very well at the box-office. . . .” These few words are Vidor's total comment on his latter-day cycle. The last film, in fact, of which he writes with any degree of personal feeling is *American Romance*



King Vidor, Irving Thalberg and Lillian Gish during the shooting of “*La Bohème*”.

(1942-44)—which is also the last of his films recognisably inspired by those ideals of “hope and faith” to which he still claims allegiance.

Twenty years before this, Vidor, who was then also working for M-G-M, told Irving Thalberg that he was “weary of making ephemeral films.” He had been nine years in Hollywood and had directed twenty-one films, a number for his own company, but most recently a series of lush-sounding romances for M-G-M (his last four had been: *Wine of Youth*, *His Hour*, *Wife of the Centaur* and *Proud Flesh*). He would like to make a picture, he told Thalberg, about any one of three subjects—“steel, wheat or war.” Thalberg favoured war, and Vidor made *The Big Parade*.

The success of *The Big Parade* seemed to put Vidor on the right track: he had recognised his theme—“*the average guy in whose hands does not lie the power to create the situations in which he finds himself, but who nevertheless feels them emotionally.*” *The Crowd* (1927) was also about an average guy, struggling for survival on the economic battlefield of the big city. *Hallelujah* (1929) was another film about simple souls (Vidor only earned the right to make this all-Negro picture by offering to invest his salary in it. Nicholas Schenk replied immediately: “*If that's the way you feel about it, I'll let you make a picture about whores.*”). But successful though these films were, it became no easier to persuade producers to accept subjects of social relevance. To make *Our Daily Bread* in 1934, Vidor had to mortgage all his personal possessions and venture into independent production. Eight years later, stimulated by America's entry into the second world war, M-G-M allowed him to undertake a film on the first of his chosen themes—*American Romance*, a saga of individual enterprise in the American steel industry.

Reading Vidor's comments on the fate of his film, one is reminded of other harsh experiences suffered by artists at the same hands. “*I've just seen the greatest picture our company has ever made,*” said Louis B. Mayer after the preview. But after the premiere, the order came through from New York that half an hour was to be cut out of the film. Vidor reluctantly agreed, and was about to start work, when he discovered that the cuts had already been made by the studio. “*At the lowest emotional level I have reached since I have been in Hollywood, I went to my office, packed up my books, papers, scripts and photographs, and moved out of the studio.*”

But to attribute the failure of *American Romance*, and the apparent effect of this on its director, entirely to the iron hand of M-G-M would be over simple. For, alas, to the unprejudiced (or even the favourably prejudiced) eye, the film has not the appearance of a dismembered masterpiece. The conception is large, but there are no indications that the execution ever came up to it. The script is banal: the

*King Vidor's autobiography will be published in Britain later in the year by Longmans, Green & Co.

performances without fire (Vidor wanted Spencer Tracy to play his hero, but had to make do with Brian Donlevy); and the stolid direction rarely succeeds in conjuring the necessary poetry out of these unpromising elements. The sad conclusion is inescapable that by 1942 Vidor's early inspiration, the inspiration of commonplace humanity ("*Deep down inside there's something pretty terrific in everyone*"), was exhausted. What has taken its place—for Vidor believes too deeply in the cinema to be able for long to make films entirely without personality—is something both less simple and less conscious. Films like *The Fountainhead*, *Beyond the Forest* and *Ruby Gentry* are genuine statements, however half-baked and however distasteful.

None of this is directly revealed in *A Tree is a Tree*, though it is indicated plainly enough in the proportions of the book. It is of his early years that Vidor writes in detail, with a gusto that itself explains his irresistible capacity for success, and an incisive and humorous observation that brings into sharpest focus some of the most colourful personalities of that far-distant Hollywood. Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND will already appreciate Vidor's power of anecdote from his brilliant description (recently reprinted from this book) of a monstrous script conference with Irving Thalberg, conducted on the way to, during, and immediately after Mabel Normand's funeral. There are glimpses equally telling of John Gilbert and Garbo (who at tennis was "a bulwark of strength at the net"); Lillian Gish, Eleanor Glyn (devising a particularly effective love scene in which the hero should caress the heroine's cheek with the tips of his eyelashes); Chaplin and Goldwyn; Selznick ("*I don't care what story you use so long as we call it Bird of Paradise and Del Rio jumps into a flaming volcano at the end*"); and—a particularly rich chapter—Marion Davies and her gallant friend William Randolph Hearst: "*Presently the great man rose and in a high-pitched voice said, 'King's right. But I'm right, too—because I'm not going to let Marion be hit in the face with a pie.'*"

But the book has more in it than absorbing gossip about the great. Vidor writes just as well of his own practice in the cinema—unpretentiously, but with the seriousness of the professional who has remained an enthusiast. The medium, in those days at least, was full of exciting possibilities: he set his crowds marching to the beat of a metronome, experimented in rhythmical action and editing, and in his first sound film was daring enough to use sound imaginatively instead of as a mere dialogue recorder. There is a certain sadness in his backward look to a Hollywood that was at once less sophisticated and more self-assured; in which creative achievement was recognised and even here and there encouraged; when it was possible for a director whose picture had to be cut to take the reels of film home with him and perform the operation during his free evenings—as Vidor records that he took 180 feet out of *The Big Parade* by cutting four frames on each side of every splice. Amongst the illustrations in *A Tree is a Tree* is a charming group taken on the M-G-M lot in 1930: Garbo and the Talmadge sisters; Norma Shearer and Aileen Pringle; Thalberg; John Gilbert sprawled on the grass in front. And at the back, unrecognisable under a tennis visor and behind a large moustache, stands Vidor, a little, solid man, with a face elsewhere strikingly reminiscent of the young Peter Brook. This is the Vidor—the maker of *The Big Parade*, *The Crowd*, *Hallelujah*—who will survive; it is high time we were allowed to rediscover him.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CINEMA, by René Clair. (William Kimber, 18s.)

COCTEAU ON THE FILM, A conversation recorded by André Fraigneau. Illustrated. (Dennis Dobson, 12s. 6d.)

Reviewed by Alexander Mackendrick

Can creator turn critic? Should the artist in one medium appear in print to explain his own work or analyse the work of others?

It does not usually work out well. But these two great names of the French cinema are very special cases. René Clair was a film journalist before he became a director; Jean Cocteau is also a poet, playwright, draughtsman and—to judge

from this volume—a brilliant conversationalist.

Clair's *Reflections on the Cinema* is a fascinating scrapbook, excerpts from critical writings that begin in 1923 and are mostly concerned with the period at the end of silent films and the beginning of sound. They are presented as dialogue between the young critic of the 'twenties and the now famous figure of today.

Their exchange is somehow sad. Not just because all the stupidities which the young writer attacks are still smugly with us, but also because the intolerant idealist of that period seems both more excited and more exciting. It was a time of manifestos and extravagant optimism. "Cinema," says the young writer, "is an art still coming to birth. The 'sense of cinema' which we are striving to acquire will come quite naturally to our successors. We expect a great deal of these men of tomorrow," he writes. "We probably are the sacrificed generation, the first to catch a glimpse, but no more than a glimpse, of what will be realised by those who follow."

One feels ashamed. No one will blame René Clair if he appears a little envious of "the thin young man busy correcting proofs in a kind of triangular cupboard that strives to pass as an office." The interspersed comments written in 1950 are much wiser but more weary. (When was it that Clair made *La Beauté du Diable*?) The René Clair of 1927 even warns us of the dangers of disillusionment in success. "Once absorbed into the machinery of the industry," he writes, "a film-maker can change. Indignation gradually cools. The dearest projects become dreams of another world. Routine begins to assume an air of reasonable tradition. One 'sobers down.' And 'the film people' are very pleased. 'You are a great director,' they tell him."

René Clair's dearest projects of today are appallingly reasonable. Why, he asks, can't we have a system which prevents negligence or wilful commercial vandalism from destroying all copies of the great film masterpieces of the past? Couldn't we organise, he suggests, an international charter of the cinema, based on the principle that each country has the right to safeguard the interest of its own cinema industry while, at the same time, the international exchange of films has "a spiritual value which transcends the commercial"?

One disappointment, for me at least, is that this book manages to reveal so little of the personality of the film-maker. René Clair in print is so different from René Clair on celluloid. So serious. So earnest. So concerned with careful analysis of æsthetic principle. A critic, in fact, who strives to be objective.

It is not a complaint you can make about Jean Cocteau.

His interviewer puts the question to Cocteau: can you take up the position of a critic in front of your own work? The answer he gets is typical, complicated but fascinating. "A work of art, once it has detached itself from us, begins to live according to its readers or its audiences. And we ourselves undergo a transformation. We look at it from the outside, and it surprises us. We see its errors, but we cannot correct them. The worst is of the same fabric as the best, and these threads so closely interwoven that by pulling at one we risk destroying the lot."

This is a trademark of Cocteau's. While intensely involved in secret inward conflicts, he can still stand outside himself and observe. He does it both privately and professionally. How much of his brilliance in cinema does he owe to this privileged detachment from the claustrophobia of the film industry?

"Film-making is not my profession. Nothing compels me to direct film after film, to chase actors for a particular story and vice versa, to be ceaselessly driven to hunt for books and plays, and while you shoot one film to rack your brains over the problems of the next."

"I don't have ideas, I have embryos of ideas of which I am not the master; and I can start on a task only if, instead of having an idea, an idea has me. It haunts, disturbs, and torments me so unbearably that I am forced to get it out, to rid myself of it at any cost."

The massive superstructure of the picture business, the "executives" and trades unionists, must regard Cocteau with deep suspicion. This is no way to run a railway. What is more, the man can have a dangerously demoralising influence on senior creative personnel.

The craftsman, however, must respect him. For on the studio floor there is clearly no amateurism about this man.

He uses the most advanced techniques, baffling even to experts, with unaffected ease and simplicity. And in return, Cocteau feels at home among the craftsmen. "My big discovery," he says, "was that cinematograph was the refuge of the craftsman. The studio floor is the last stronghold of feudalism, where people spare no pains to please the master—a master not in any imperialist sense, but rather the master builder of the days of the cathedrals, who worked as hard as any of his men. In our days, craftsmen are regarded as the aristocracy of the working classes. There is a tendency to do away with craftsmanship. But on the studio floor, the technicians are craftsmen in the strictest sense of the term, particularly in France, where individual resourcefulness and inventiveness still have their place." But with all his complete command of the tricks of the trade, Cocteau has never fallen into the trap of respecting technique as an end in itself. Of his best (and trickiest!) film, *Orphée*, Clouzot says: "That film proves that there is no such thing as technique, but only invention, and that the only possible technique is the one every man invents for himself, according to the job he is doing."

Expressed in this exhaustive conversation is the attitude of one who demands recognition of his right to an artist's egotism. In an industrialised era and within a highly centralised industry it is a dramatic claim. If you admire and respect his work (as I do), it makes intoxicating reading. Anglo-Saxon hackles of embarrassment may rise at the boldness of his self-display, but the gesture is much too big to be mistaken for conceit. Even those whose timidity or lack of talent allows them no chance to imitate must feel exhilarated.

COMEDY FILMS, by John Montgomery. Illustrated. (Allen and Unwin, 21s.)

Reviewed by Liam O'Laoghaire

The literature of the cinema has now reached a stage where most of the introductory generalisation has been done, and it remains for specialised aspects of the youngest art to receive detailed treatment. Consequently a work with this title raises hopes of finding at last an analysis of the comic inventions which have achieved expression in this medium.

But the author frankly disillusion us, and with a disarming modesty acknowledges from the start the limitations under which he has worked.

Many interesting facts have been absorbed into the text; the story of Cecil Hepworth, for example, is given a whole chapter, and there are detailed accounts of the early film studios, lists of stars employed by the principal American studios in the 'twenties, and anecdotes concerning such people as Chaplin and the Marx Brothers. In its discursive way the book makes entertaining reading, but too often the title is forgotten amongst information about the beginnings of the cinema, details of stars' salaries and such stray miscellanea.

There is a need for an authoritative study of screen comedy; and unfortunately this book does not fill it. The big American personalities like Chaplin and Lloyd are given due prominence, but other important claimants to recognition in this field—particularly in Europe—are neglected. For instance, the political satires of the Czech comedians Voskovec and Werich are at present much under-rated, and there is the work of Nils Poppe and of Cantinflas, to mention only two others. Naturally, the trouble in writing a book on this fascinating subject is the appalling difficulty of laying hands on the basic film material for study and analysis. It is this difficulty which will limit writers on film history until the problem of conservation of films is fully tackled.

Pudovkin's **FILM ACTING** and **FILM TECHNIQUE** have recently been reprinted in one volume (*Vision Press*, 21s.). It is an exact reprint of earlier editions; *Film Acting* has the excellent original illustrations but still has no index—an omission which might have been remedied at little cost. The brief but pointed introduction which Lewis Jacobs contributed to the first American edition is included, and while this admirably sums up the historical significance of Pudovkin's films and writings, it seems a pity that it should completely oust Ivor Montague's original prefaces, which still witnessed the excitement of the first impact of these books. Messrs. Lund Humphries have printed this edition by the Replika process, which, while it has many advantages from the point of view of economy, is typographically inferior. It would be ungrateful, however, to quibble at any means which can make available at such a reasonable price these standard and indispensable works on the film.

THE SOUND TRACK

The average length for one side of a standard-speed gramophone record is about four minutes. This has restricted sound-track recording to hit songs, musical themes and brief quotations from speeches. But the use of the long-playing record has extended the field, and the first issue to take full advantage of the new possibilities is the collection of "Dramatic Highlights from *Julius Caesar*" (M-G-M C.751).

Although many cuts have been made, there is about an hour's playing time on this excellently edited record, and it is certainly pleasant to be able to listen for half an hour without the interruption of turning over sides. Substantial sections of the track are linked by John Houseman in a beautifully spoken narration; any fears that "Dramatic Highlights" might imply a somewhat superficial approach to the material are soon dispelled.

Two interesting features emerge from listening to the recordings, as distinct from seeing the film. Firstly, the crowd becomes a living, exciting element in the dramatic structure. It is an electrifying sound, frightening in its vacillation under the arguments of Brutus and Antony, terrible alike in its vociferous approval and unleashed wrath.

Secondly, the quality of the voices tends to produce a re-assessment of the acting. The cultured delivery of the verse by John Gielgud gives him an advantage over James Mason that did not seem quite so pronounced when watching their performances. Edmond O'Brien's forthright style is robbed of its colour without the visuals. Marlon Brando, criticised often for his ranting, displays a fascinating similarity to Olivier at moments in *Henry V*, when heard on records,

particularly in the declamation over Cæsar's body ("Cry 'Havoc'"). Such changes as "you forgot the will" for "you have forgot the will" also tend to emerge more clearly.

Twenty quotations make up the complete collection. There are notable examples of the crowd during the speeches between Cassius and Brutus while Cæsar is being offered the crown and again after Cæsar's death; the gasp when Antony emerges from the Capitol with Cæsar's body is impressive. There is full opportunity to assess the speeches by Deborah Kerr (Portia) and Greer Garson (Calpurnia). And it is interesting to notice the clarity with which most of the dialogue has been recorded, with rare concessions to natural sound and music. As the play progresses, however, music begins to be used more frequently, notably during the appearance of Cæsar's ghost and in the battle scenes. On the whole, Rozsa's score is undistinguished, but he does have effective moments during the approach to Philippi and in the under-scoring of Brutus's final speech; here the heavy beat provides a kind of counterpoint, suggesting the approach of unseen armies, epitomising the ultimate triumph of Cæsar's spirit over the conspirators. Single drum beats point the final flicker of the lamp as Brutus lies in state; then, silence.

In a very different vein, there is a delightful long-playing record of the principal numbers from the sound track of *The Band Wagon* (M-G-M C.752), including a full version of stirring sounds from "The Girl Hunt Ballet."

JOHN HUNTLEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

The "X" Certificate

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—When our Central Cinema Group met last week we discussed the article on the "X" Certificate which is in January-March SIGHT AND SOUND. The Group have asked me to say how very much they appreciate this article and how it has made the whole position so much clearer to us.

We are mainly concerned with cinema programmes for the whole family, but we are very anxious that the "X" Certificate shall enable us to see serious adult films and not be an excuse for misleading and lurid advertisements.

We are bringing this article to the notice of our members who are especially interested in the cinema.

Yours faithfully,

MAY ADDLESHAW,

The Mothers' Union, Secretary, Central Cinema Group.
Tufton Street,
Westminster, S.W.1.

Richard Winnington

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—Everyone will appreciate your magazine's collected tributes to Richard Winnington. We should, however, be serving his memory ill if we allow, as Paul Rotha puts it, his work to be "lost in the dust of the newspaper files".

I suggest that SIGHT AND SOUND might devote some space in future issues to reprinting a selection of his best work, plus, of course, those inimitable sketches. Or, better still, why can't some enterprising publisher produce a sequel to *Drawn and Quartered*? At any rate, some form of permanent memorial is desirable.

Yours faithfully,

RUPERT BUTLER.

18 Draycott Place,
S.W.3.

Stroheim and Welles

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—It is possible that others have noted a similarity in the work of Erich von Stroheim and Orson Welles, but I have not read of it in any of the film journals. Having seen the early Stroheim films at the National Film Theatre, this similarity has struck me forcibly. There are the superficial points in common; the strength of personality, and the power to depict oversize characters on the screen; the combination of acting talent and out-of-the-ordinary gifts as directors; their inability to work within the framework of a commercial Hollywood. In their work as directors, I think, the similarity bears even closer and more detailed analysis, and I hope that someone will do this. In the first place, they both attempt to investigate problems and subjects beyond the normal interest of American film producers, with a seriousness unfortunately all too rare today. They are greatly attracted by the frailty of human personality and manage to relate the failings of individuals to the faults of society as a whole. What is more, they are both epic artists; the settings for their moralities are grandiose and inhuman, and they deal with beings on the verge of the insane

—normal people seen through a magnifying glass, or rather in those distorting mirrors of the fun fair. That both of them should have been rather bad organisers, from a commercial point of view, is perhaps understandable, and their extravagance, in their determination to concentrate on their themes, rather than box-office, has inevitably resulted in their exile.

I do hope that someone with the time and ability will investigate this suggestion further.

Yours faithfully,

CHARLES S. SPENCER.

14 Brunswick House,
Balcombe Street,
London, N.W.1.

Monsieur Vincent

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—I write in support of Miss E. D. Turbin's letter about the film *Monsieur Vincent*, her criticism of David Fisher's remarks and her praise of Pierre Fresnay's performance. I am not a Catholic. . . .

I suspect that there is a certain amount of fashion in film criticism, as in so much else in life and the arts, and *Monsieur Vincent* has, for some reason, after its first impact, been left out of books, periodicals and magazines about films. Why?

The producer seemed to me to obtain a rare effect of credibility for a historical film—so that I wonder if, in retrospect, it has become like a piece of the remembered past instead of merely a film, and the achievement in making it so forgotten.

Another thing—the goodness of Vincent's life is not the sort of subject which makes a popular theme for films today. If avarice, adultery or any other sin had made his life into a tragedy, we should have accepted its story, I suspect, more willingly. A pity, though, if the film should be forgotten because of our guilt complexes.

Yours faithfully,

B. H. NUTTALL (MRS.)

Elm Cottage,
Thornhill,
Dewsbury,
Yorks.

Stock Shots

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—Your correspondents Robert E. Dallison and Roy Telford in the July-September 1953 issue both refer to the volcanic explosion in *Road to Bali* as deriving from Paramount films *Aloma of the South Seas* and *Her Jungle Love*. Mr. Dallison mentions its use also in *When Worlds Collide*. It seems to me this same volcano erupted in another Dorothy Lamour film, *Rainbow Island*. The order would, therefore, seem to be *Her Jungle Love* (1938), *Aloma of the South Seas* (1942), *Rainbow Island* (1946), *When Worlds Collide* (1952), *Road to Bali* (1952), with Miss Lamour in danger four times out of the possible five.

Yours faithfully,

EDWIN V. DYER.

Raymond Terrace Road,
Williamstown 2.N.,
New South Wales,

(GARBO, Continued from page 190)

Through what hoops, when all is said and done, she has been put by Seastrom, Cukor, Clarence Brown and the rest of her mentors! She has gone blonde for them, danced "La Chica-Choca" for them, played a travesty of Sarah Bernhardt for them, stood straight-faced by for them as Lewis Stone warned her of "a new weapon called The Tank." Can we ask for more self abnegation? A life of Duse was once mooted for her—what an *éducation sentimentale*, one guesses, she would have supplied for D'Annunzio! Then there was "The Lady in the Iron Mask"—from Nuremberg, perhaps? Later, she hovered over, but did not settle on, a mimed role in Lifar's ballet version of *Phèdre*. And at the last moment, when all seemed fixed, she sidestepped the leading part in Balzac's

La Duchesse de Langeais. The most recent, least plausible rumour of all insisted that she would film *La Folle de Chaillot*, with Chaplin as the Rag-Picker. . . .

So it looks as if we're never to know whether or not she was a great actress. Do I not find the death-scene of *Camille* or the bedroom-stroking scene of *Queen Christina* commensurate with the demands of great acting? On balance, no. The great actress, as G. H. Lewes declared, must show her greatness in the highest reaches of her art; and it must strictly be counted against Garbo that she never attempted Hedda, or Masha, or St. Joan, or Medea. We must acclaim a glorious woman who exhibited herself more profoundly to the camera than any of her contemporaries: but the final accolade must, if we are honest, be withheld.

LATEST SELECTION OF 16mm COLOUR FILMS

ALL ABOUT

Butlin's

FOR
FREE
EXHIBITION

Now available

"HOLIDAYS FOR ALL" 16mm sound film
in colour, running time 10 minutes

"HOLIDAY ALBUM" 16mm sound film in
colour, running time 20 minutes

"HOLIDAYS WITH PLAY" 16mm sound
film in colour, running time 20 minutes

"BRITAIN'S BEST HOLIDAY" 16mm silent
film in colour, running time 15 minutes

See what a Butlin holiday is really like—where
you stay, what you do, the people you meet—in
these happy, entertaining films made at the various
Butlin Holiday Camps and at Butlin's Ocean
Hotel, Brighton. Copies of the film will gladly be
supplied on loan, free of charge, on application to:

DEPARTMENT F

BUTLIN'S LTD., 439 OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1

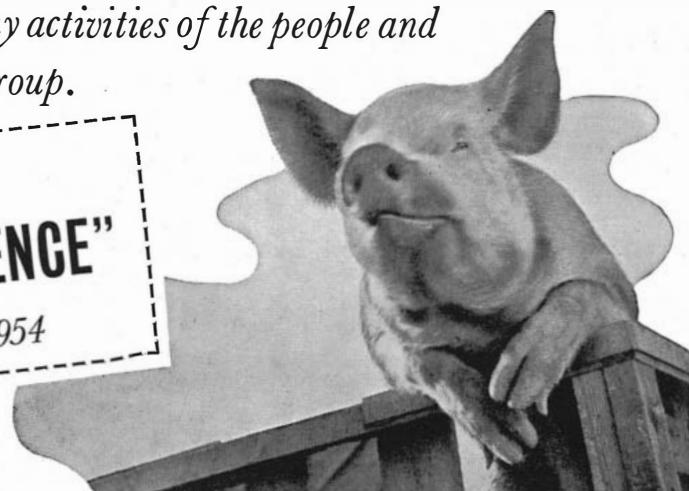
Telephone : MAYfair 6616

*The UNILEVER series of magazine films gives information
in an interesting way about the many activities of the people and
companies in a great industrial group.*

Unilever Magazine No. 5
"FARMING WITH A DIFFERENCE"
will be available from March 1st, 1954

This story of a farm
shows how answers are found to
many of the problems involved
in increasing our production of
home grown food. The birth of
a calf is one of the many scenes
giving glimpses of a typical day
in the life of the farm.

UIS 7-547-120



This sound film can be borrowed free of charge in both 16mm. and 35mm. Running time 20 minutes

A catalogue giving full details can be obtained from:—

Unilever Limited

Information Division SS3

UNILEVER HOUSE, LONDON, E.C.4

(THE ADVENT OF LEVIATHAN, *Continued from page 193*)

Theoretically, the producer now had £4,000 with which to make his film. In fact, he soon found that much of that money was not available for actual production. In the first place it was normal for his release contract—or guarantee of distribution, as it is now more generally called—to stipulate that the sound should be recorded on a certain system for which a heavy royalty was payable. More important, however, was that his next port of call after the renter was some financier who would be prepared either to lend him the money or to provide security for raising a loan. It may be that the experience of one particular producer was especially bitter. Nevertheless the following quotation from an article written in 1932 relates the sad end of one high hope*:

"You approach a financier. He begins by shouting that he trusts you have not come about some fool film business ('*Films are such a damned gamble, old man*'). You flourish your contract. The financier agrees to back your credit at the bank for £3,000 for a week and a half. That means that the financier will make £1,000 profit for a ten days' loan; that means that you will have

* "Facts for Finance," by Oswald Blakeston (*Close Up*, March, 1932).

(A REVIEW OF REVIEWS, *Continued from page 208*)

At one time there was nothing very genteel about the pursuit of the cinema. When I wrote my first movie piece in 1919 saying a certain 2-reel comic called Chaplin was somewhat more of an artist that seemed to be academically allowed, I was taken aside gently and told I was "pursuing the shadow instead of the substance". Cinema was an odd pursuit for a long time. Now it is possible to make a respectable literary affair of it. It has museums. It has historians. It has institutes and academies. One can now make a profession of the cinema, quite apart from making or discovering it, and it is as honest a way of being a professional stuffed shirt as any other.

To do them justice, the English literates are better at this than most. They write well and they speak well, and have a larger grounding in the arts often than some of the more important film-makers. But the profession has its limits as well as its dangers. One limit is that the expounding of taste is something other than the revealing of it, as Nietzsche once said of professors' wives. The danger comes of making a vested interest in the forms of taste one knows, and in static personalities it tends to be limited. Look then for a certain snobbery about the knowledge of the old. Look therefore for the building of myths in and around the "greats", so that it may be the more important to reveal their secret. Look for a positive distaste of the contemporary because no academic aura yet surrounds it. The contemporary may even be embarrassing to it as, say, people like Lawrence and Eliot were embarrassing to the tastes of literature on their first appearance, and for the same reason. I am all for Anderson's Stroheim except when he appears to take it for granted that nothing could be so rich today. I am all for Whitebait's affection for that other faraway, the continental, except when he appears to take it for granted that there could be none such in his native England.

No, I do not include Dilys in this category, though sometimes she tempts me to put her in the same box and clamp the lid down. She is, of course, a bit of a

£1,000 less to cover your balance sheet. Actually the big man of money won't put down more than £1,500 as he will be able to arrange credit with the studio.

"Lo! The financier has been approached! And it might have been a decent little four-reeler, something at least to match with the Hollywood yard-cloth, had you been able to spend the full £4,000. But your talkie is rushed into the shape of an ill-considered quickie by sheer lack of funds; a programme fill-up—another Quota movie!"

It must not be imagined from this cautionary tale that all British films of the early 'thirties were simply programme fill ups. The quota quickie, it is true, left such a bad name behind it that it has tended to obscure the very real achievements made by British producers at this period. After the first few years of protection, however, many producers began to look beyond the relatively small home market; from about 1933 onwards the various "quality" films—notably Korda's *Private Life of Henry VIII*—created a feeling of confidence in the ability of British studios to make pictures that could command a world market. In many cases this confidence proved unjustified. Furthermore, the harsh realities of film economics made huge financial losses inevitable. The boom was short-lived, and by 1937—before the first Quota Act had run its course—British production had, once more, come to grief.

stuffed shirt, too. On the other hand, she combines with her snobbery about the old a voracious interest in the contemporary and a real effort in critical leadership. She is in that matter an important critic and to be taken seriously. I only ask, and naturally, where her leadership would lead us. In this matter she represents the continuing critical tradition of Bloomsbury as well as anyone does, with all its liberal enlightenment in the past and all its confusion of spirit in the present. You may read about it, if it has not been borne in on you before, in Kathleen Nott's account of T. S. Eliot and the neo-mystics in *The Emperor's Clothes*. No analysis of the present state of the arts could reward you more, and the problem it sets is one I propose to return to at length.

In the meantime, let me record my suspicion, as I read the criticism of the arts in the weeklies, that the Bloomsbury boys and girls have been taking in each other's washing for too long and may in fact be seriously out of touch with the masses. I allow that they are as skilled as ever, but know only about esoteric troubles and considerations the people in general are too healthily involved to have time for, and have too much basic humour to take seriously. This, of course, is a consistent characteristic of changing societies. It becomes important only if there emerges an act of hatred of the masses who no longer recognise the validity of the critical leadership. One would expect this to show itself in a reaching for authoritarian and "magisterial" sanctions. Is it possible to miss it? Certainly the formal approaches to the arts, the jabberwocky of the abstract, and all the other escapes into rarity are due for a slight kicking around. Where Dilys fits in I shall have to study. She is obviously too good to be taken lightly.

P.S.—I hope readers of this column will send me a note of any criticisms they find particularly notable, and also draw my attention to any cases where they feel that individual writers, directors or technicians may have been given less than their due. I propose that this should be a column where we can make something of a helpful public enquiry into the work of the critics: you can do much to enrich its observation.



MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FILMS ON

Travel and Transport

AVAILABLE ON FREE LOAN

ARE LISTED IN THE

British Transport Film Catalogue

AVAILABLE NOW FROM

The Films Officer, British Transport Commission

25 SAVILE ROW LONDON W1

FILMS FROM THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

35 mm and 16 mm

The new Distribution Catalogue of the British Film Institute contains details of 465 films available for hire from our library:

250 films on the Art and History of the Cinema.

50 films on the Arts.

125 specialised Scientific films.

20 films made by Children.

20 films from the best work by Amateurs.

The catalogue costs 3/9 post free, including a series of Supplements that will be sent as issued, without further charge, until the next edition is published. (Catalogue without Supplements: 2/9, post free).

Remittances to:

PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

British Film Institute

164 Shaftesbury Avenue

London, W.C.2



Academy Award Winners



BEST PICTURES:

"AN AMERICAN IN PARIS" (1952)

"MRS. MINIVER" (1943)

"MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY" (1936)

BEST DIRECTORS:

John Ford for "THE QUIET MAN" (1953)

William Wyler for "MRS. MINIVER" (1943)

BEST ACTORS:

Robert Donat for "GOODBYE MR. CHIPS" (1940)

Spencer Tracy for "BOYS TOWN" (1939)

Spencer Tracy for "CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS" (1938)

BEST ACTRESSES:

Ingrid Bergman for "THE MURDER IN THORNTON SQUARE" (1945)

Greer Garson for "MRS. MINIVER" (1943)

Laise Rainer for "THE GOOD EARTH" (1938)



ALL THE FILMS NAMED ABOVE
ARE AVAILABLE IN 16 mm FROM

MGM

9, ARLINGTON STREET, LONDON S.W.1.

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

will present during
April and May
a series of films by

**CAROL
REED
AND
HUMPHREY
JENNINGS**

including
**A GIRL MUST LIVE
FIRES WERE STARTED
THE STARS LOOK DOWN
THE WAY AHEAD
DIARY FOR TIMOTHY
ODD MAN OUT
THE THIRD MAN
LISTEN TO BRITAIN**

Performances at the
National Film Theatre
are only open to
Members and Associates
of the British Film Institute

Enquiries from: **THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE,**

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2